



THE MUSICAL QUARTERLY

VOL. IX

OCTOBER, 1923

NO. 4

MUSIC OR POETRY

By RALPH M. EATON

TO-NIGHT the symphony orchestra is to play a tone-poem, and programs are a-flutter as the audience hunts through the pages of musical statistics for the story. It is *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*, the merriest of which comes from the oboe and the bassoon at the forty-seventh—or is it the seventy-second?—measure. One waits with the hope of being shaken by laughter at Till's jokes, but the forty-seventh measure passes leaving only the impression of ear-splitting sounds—sounds as grotesque as Till's pranks must have been, and beyond this superficial analogy, not the slightest hint of what the music is about. So this is tone poetry! One wonders if the composer, himself, is not as great a trickster as Till.

Why not admit in plain honesty that music, alone, can not tell a story? Why take the literary attitude toward it? Why call upon it to narrate, to depict, and even to argue and philosophize, as if it were not well enough as it is? Living in the definite, we are unwilling to escape into the indefinite, and when music offers to carry us away from events and sights and ideas, we will not allow it to do so, but must attach to it a sheaf of program notes which pin it down to the actual.

The literary attitude toward music springs from a prejudice that the highest activity of the human mind is to think. We are mistrustful of expression which falls below or goes beyond thought. When one expresses himself in sounds, it is assumed that he intends to convey something by them; otherwise his expression would be irrational, for the essence of rationality, we are told,

is to mean something by what you say. So, all sounds come to be looked upon as symbols capable of carrying thoughts, and sound without meaning is an anomaly which is not admitted in good intellectual circles.

Music, however, strictly refuses to be symbolic. It is a form of human expression which is not intended to convey ideas. Distort it as we may, we can not give it the precision of speech or thought, and if, as is sometimes said, music is a language, it is a language without meaning. The speech which most nearly approaches music is speech in an unknown tongue, especially a tongue of beautiful varieties and combinations of sound. But if the meaning of the words is known, the speech becomes symbolic; it is no longer pure sound, but sound with thought added.

What then?—Are we not to think when we listen to music? Are we to suspend all activity of the mind? Are we to sink to the level of sensation? This is well enough for "jazz," the intellectualist will say, but for Beethoven and Brahms—never!

The truth is that music is designed to appeal directly to something in us which is more primitive than thought and which is the source of thought—emotion. And we may rise to emotions as well as descend to them. While poetry must take its course through the roundabout way of ideas, music goes straight to its end. There are the sounds—with a temporal and tonal pattern, and the changing colors of harmony—and the immediate response to the sounds; but there is no interposed mechanism of thought. Ideas may come after music, but music never comes through ideas.

Poetry, on the other hand, is a matter of the arrangement of words, and ideas cling to words as sin to the sinner. The poet can not help saying something, struggle as he may to escape it. That is why poetry often says so much more, or less, than its author ever guesses. He works in the medium of thought, and despite himself, thinks. Ideas are a part of the pigment of his art, and though his aim, like that of the musician, is to awaken the emotions, he must do so by the indirect way of the intellect as well as by the immediate way of the senses.

There exists much poetry which is said to be the pure music of words. Its ideas are thinned to the vanishing point; or perhaps they are not consciously thinned because they were never conspicuously present. But even so, they are never eliminated. They persist as shadows which haunt the words, and we find ourselves flagellating the phrases of such poetry for a meaning. There is a charm about this beautiful nonsense, beyond the charm of its

sounds and rhythms, in the elusive and impalpable quality of its ideas. It is a fancy of fancies, an insubstantiality of insubstantialities, which threatens to fly off into nothing but does not quite do so. We feel that the poet "beats in the void his luminous wings in vain" to soar into perfect song, but that he can not while he merely speaks.

The gift of the poet is phrase-making; he is a conjurer with speech, but he can also be a conjurer with thoughts. After all, words are the clothing of ideas, and if there is nothing to clothe there is little need of garments, though garments in themselves may be very elegant. When the poet sets forth a great idea in great words, we have a Shakespeare or a Milton; when exquisite speech with only a tincture of thought comes from him, we have a Swinburne. The world is blessed by both, for the art of phrase-making, the power of graceful utterance even without ideas, is a thing of perfection.

With some poets musical speech, as a gift, is almost wholly lacking, though they sometimes achieve it through the emotional force of their ideas. Emerson is of this type. But for the most part great ideas go unclothed, or clothed only in the plainest words. The philosopher is as a rule no poet; he casts aside the decorative uses of language and resorts to terminology. If his phrases are often vile, they are, nevertheless, exact; but from him the music of speech has fled and his words are vehicles for thoughts, nothing more.

Poetry thus lies midway between music and philosophy. Philosophy is the art of building beauty, and sometimes truth, out of ideas; music the art of building beauty into sounds; and poetry the art of uttering beautifully ideas which in themselves have beauty. There are poets who tend either towards philosophy or music. The richer poets are both philosophers and musicians of speech, and do not gravitate to the edges of their art.

Philosophy is completely absent from music, which passes over the boundaries of poetry into another world. Music exists through a medium of non-symbolic sounds. There is no element of representation in it, whereas in words representation is never absent. The only way in which music can represent is by imitation—birds singing through the flute, the sound of running waters playing over the strings; and such imitations are extremely limited. They do not usually enrich music; they often render it absurd, but if they are beautiful in themselves they will enter smoothly as symbolic trifles in a whole which is not symbolic.

But does not music stand for abstract qualities, for moods and emotions? Does it not represent the struggles and joys of the

soul, if not the external realities of nature? This, I think, is the most common opinion of the purpose of music.

The answer is that music no more symbolizes or is able to symbolize a mood or an emotion than to tell the story of *Till Eulenspiegel's* pranks. Beside an emotion, the tinkling of bells or the rattle of guns would be easy matter for musical representation. These are within the compass of imitation by sound. But there is no substance, sound or color in a mood; it is thin air. In my youth I was taught that the minor key denotes sadness and the major joy. I resented it then, but could not say why. Now I know that this is looking at music in a restricted way, from the literary angle. The emotionality of music is more evanescent.

We listen to-day to the Prelude to *Parsifal* and are stirred with religious fervor, with devotion and the mystery of God; again it is love and the delight of the eye in woman's beauty; again sorrow and subtle peace. In fact, it is none of these, or all and more. The music is fluid, tied to no meaning, beyond fixation. The limits of our reaction to it are so wide that we can not know what it will call forth, and if it re-presents us with an emotion, it does so only by accident or habitual association. When it can evoke nothing more than a customary feeling, it has lost its spell over us and become stereotyped. "Here it is again," we say,—“that infernal love-sickness of the second act.”

Music creates a mood but does not fix or symbolize it. The freedom of music from meaning is the power of it. Music is air in which we may stretch and breathe as we choose. Give it a meaning and you make it something less than poetry, because the meaning can never be an integral part of it, but only a gratuitous addendum.

In ordinary life we are usually far removed from expression without meaning. We are self-conscious and sophisticated; we look everywhere for things to interpret. But all expressions are originally without meaning and only in a developed state do acts and sounds take on significance. Thus the tendency to make and appreciate music lies deep in human nature in the inclination toward non-symbolic expression.

Expression is originally wrung from us by the force of emotions, by the pressure of something within or the appeal of something without, and only by custom do acts and sounds come to stand for these things. Habit is the source of reasoning, and if words were like the tones of music, shifting in their effects upon us, calling forth to-day one response and to-morrow another, we should have difficulty in linking them into chains of thought and

in communicating with others. Thinking—as opposed to dreaming—is a practical matter; it is a tool by means of which we mould the world to our purposes; if I can think out a problem I am relieved of the discomfort of working it out by trial and error. But thought, like all tools, must have rigidity, otherwise it would bend in the hand. Rigidity of expression, rationality, logic, follow upon fluidity and may destroy it.

Children are freer than older people in their immediate expressions, because they are less consciously thoughtful and have no notion that each of their expressions should convey an idea. Their senses are awake, and they find pleasure in the contours and colors of things, in movements, gestures, and sounds, without knowing or caring to what they refer. And many of us who are not children, if we arise from bed on a sunny morning with trees waving at the window and a breeze blowing in, may find ourselves doing a dance for no reason at all, or warbling an air which came into our head from nowhere. There are times when the emotions overflow, not necessarily into thoughts or ideas, but into meaningless and irrepressible activity. This is the impulse to non-symbolic expression which lies beneath music.

The unconstrained and wordless expressions of the child give place in time to the definiteness of adult thought. We grow up into rational beings—at least those of us who are not artists. We become scientists, businessmen, politicians, and leave behind us the spontaneous irrationality of childhood. We begin to think.

Are we to be congratulated on this growth? An eminent philosopher has said that thought is “a divorce from reality”—a difficult idea for people who believe that thinking possesses a special magic to reveal realities. Mystics of all ages have scorned thought—and the artist, the musician above all, is at bottom a mystic—because thought deals only at second hand with realities. Symbols are its coin. For the mind symbols take the place of things, and we move in the imperfect world of representations thus created as if it were a complete and real world. This is why thought is a divorce from reality, and symbols are its decree of divorce.

The thinker will see the world through his abstractions and may miss its whole quality. If we go with him into the streets on a spring day, the people hurrying to their work will be to him an economic problem, the leaves on the trees a botanical problem, the vehicles rushing by on the pavements a traffic problem. On some occasions one longs to doff his ideas and get beyond thoughts into the intimate presence of things as they are. This is the mood

of the mystic. He does not care for the second-hand presentations of thought—even of his own thought. He refuses to see things through ideas, but wishes to touch them, to be at one with them, with no distorting glass of the intellect between. And it is only in the mood of the mystic that music can be understood.

Since music stands for no other reality than itself, it can not separate us from any reality. It is complete, self-contained. The impulse to expression, the mood, which gives rise to a musical composition is embedded in the music. The tonal structure can not be thought of as a symbol of love, grief, exaltation, worship, or of any ideas which come to the surface within these emotions. The music *is* love, grief, exaltation, worship, themselves, living in tones.

This statement may seem less paradoxical if we put it in another way. The immediate expressions of an emotion are connected with it beyond any separation; the emotion lives through the expression, and the expression through the emotion. William James tells us that our emotions are not the causes of what we do when we feel them, but they *are* what we do. My grief is my tears, my anger the flushing of my face and the blow struck, my fear the trembling of my body and the creeping of my flesh.

Music is, therefore, a prolongation, a projection of an emotion. But it is less specific than any single state of mind; it is emotion generalized, so that we ought not to say that a piece of music is love, grief, or any particular feeling. To find a musical composition moving and full of beauty is sufficient. It is not necessary to give a name to what it arouses.

The element of form in music is often said to be its rationality, its "mind." But rationality, I think, involves more than the perception of form. To rationalize is to solve problems, to draw conclusions, to refer to something through symbols and to convey definite knowledge. To be sure, the perception of form demands more than sensation; some unifying action of the mind is necessary; but to perceive something as a whole and to appreciate the interrelations of its parts is not to rationalize about it.

The intellectualist too frequently treats music as a mathematical problem. We are shown a theme. Yes, it is a simple, workman-like theme, good lath and plaster for the structure, and we are led through its turnings, now rightside-up, now wrongside-up, backwards, forwards, here in one key, there in another. We applaud the skill. We have a thorough understanding of the interrelations of the parts—that is, of the form. We see the "mind" of the musical composition spread out before us. But

often we find it necessary to ask, where is the beauty, where the immediate appeal of this form? Form may be ugly, dull, lifeless; and there is more to music than workmanship. Some music has been rationalized to death; it is like a small boy with an overgrown head; and when we hear it we pray to be allowed to sink into the depths of a Brahms *Allegretto*, and breathe, not think.

The appreciation of musical form is quite different from the conscious analysis of it, and the æsthetic pleasure in form belongs to the mind not *qua* rationalizer or critic, but to the mind in some broader sense. A letter from a friend of the writer shows clearly how the musician appreciates form: "I can only say that, for me, it is impossible really to enjoy music unless my mind is active.—Here is a poser for you: My mind does not necessarily think in words; it seems perfectly capable of thinking in terms of musical phraseology. A composer starts off with a theme: very well, my mind absorbs that theme as it would a new word. When it recurs in the course of the musical fabric, my mind recognizes it and takes delight in the recognition, a delight enhanced, it may be, by the perception that now it is more beautiful, harmonized differently, in another key, or with a new counterpoint. These are, I feel, intellectual enjoyments and they are a legitimate element of the sense of beauty." This is musical "thinking" of the right sort.

The conscious rationality of the Wagnerian operas, on the other hand, is like some systems of metaphysics. There is supposed to be a hidden significance in every phrase. The smallest note has a meaning and we go to listen with a musical Baedeker in hand. At length we arrive at a maturity of appreciation; we realize that the music is great not because we can remember its meaning, but because we can forget it. We become aware that Wagner's ear for beauty surpassed his explanations and that his hidden meanings are claptrap, like the attempts of a child at an intricate game; that his power to mould emotion into sound remains quite untouched by any significance the operas may have.

Let us forget our musical Baedekers. The supreme freedom of music from rationality gives it sway over us. It can take us for a time away from thoughts to places in our natures upon which thoughts are merely the flotsam. We can not appreciate music by telling stories about it, by seeing pretty sights or thinking sweet things when we hear it. We must enter, live in, and be one with it. A symphony is a little Nirvana ready to receive us, and the stories we tell about it are mocking tales which may shut us out from a mystical experience.

ALEXANDER SEROFF AND HIS RELATIONS TO WAGNER AND LISZT

By O. VON RIESEMANN

ALEXANDER SEROFF (SIEROV), one of the most important and certainly one of the most strikingly temperamental among Russian writers on music, the creator of several operas of no mean significance, two of which, "Judith" and "Rogneda," took rank with the leading favorites on the repertory of all the great Russian operatic stages until shortly before the beginning of the Soviet régime, was during his lifetime one of the most enthusiastic champions in Russia of Wagner's art.

His personal relations to the Master of Bayreuth assumed in the course of years the character of cordial friendship. These relations have been practically unnoted by European musical literature, scarcely one of the writers on the history of music being familiar with the Russian language, and none of Seroff's writings concerning music, or other documents touching his career (letters, memoirs, etc.), having as yet been translated. Nevertheless, their intercourse affords much of interest not only with regard to Seroff, but also for the characterization of Wagner himself.

After Seroff had become personally acquainted with Wagner (in 1858) he cherished the wish to devote himself heart and soul to the Wagner cause. It was his opinion "that such a being as Wagner has every right to claim that even *such as we* (sans fausse modestie), setting aside all personal interests, should esteem ourselves fortunate to assist him even in practical details quite apart from our unswerving daily and hourly apostleship."

With great difficulty, tasking his energies to the utmost, Seroff succeeded in moving the director of the Imperial Theatre, Saburow, to order the scores of the Wagnerian music-dramas for the Marientheater; for these scores Wagner was to receive 3000 francs from Saburow. In connection with this incident a very interesting correspondence was carried on between Wagner and Seroff. Seroff's attitude is best characterized by a letter which he wrote at the time to his sister Sophie, "*sa parente plus que charnelle, sa parente intellectuelle,*" as he was fond of calling her. We therefore quote it entire:

I take a few minutes to write you to-day, having just received from Paris a letter from Wagner. I shall enlarge upon this letter and

its history directly; but first I will tell you, before I forget it—and thanking you for the trouble you have taken—that the Directorate has at last (only a few days ago!) received the scores of the Wagner operas, almost coincidentally with the receipt from Breitkopf which you sent me.—Where should we have been, if we had *waited* for those scores! The concerts¹ would have been robbed of their chief interest. Nobody knows where the scores disappeared to for so long. Now they will be of no use until next Spring, excepting in so far as they furnish me with an opportunity to study “The Flying Dutchman,” whose orchestration I am not familiar with. I have the entire “Lohengrin” (Liszt’s copy, as you know) at home. And “Tannhäuser” will also be my constant companion. Odojewski has placed his score at my disposal unconditionally (I have the agreement in writing). Wagner’s four operas take turns in occupying my organ-desk.

You will remember the promise that Saburow made me *personally*, to send Wagner 3000 francs. Think of it—since making this promise precisely two months have passed, and Wagner has not yet received the money. Indeed, I begin to think that he is never going to get it. Saburow (so every one tells me) is a very unreliable person. His word is worthless. It is beginning to look as if we had acted like idiots in this Wagner affair. Nous sommes les dupes de M-r. le général! Now this General is in Paris (though Wagner does not yet know it), and if Wagner himself were to take the matter in hand it might be arranged. But why all this fuss in a business which is so inconceivably simple for Saburow? As Wagner remarks in his letter of to-day, would it not have sufficed if Saburow had given Rothschild an order with the one word “pay”?—That would have closed the incident. Instead of that, he lets poor Wagner wait *two months* in the most cruel and distressing poverty, despite his *promise* to send him 3000 francs, and compels him, poor man, to telegraph me twice, the last time with answer prepaid (all that costs money). I hastened to Saburow’s immediately (of course I did not find him at home, as always happens in St. Petersburg). Not without difficulty, I obtained an audience on Sunday, April 17/29. Saburow acted as if he were somewhat put out that I should remind him of an incident with regard to which *he had already written twice to Paris*. (These were his own words, addressed directly to me.) I asked, *to whom* he had written. He said at first that he had written to Rothschild; but Wagner had called there time after time and found nothing. Thereupon Saburow said, “No, not to Rothschild, but to another address—Chaussée d’Autin, 37, M. Pereyra. The last letter was written about a week and a half ago.” What could be better or simpler! I fly to the telegraph office and send Wagner a message, supposing that its receipt must put an end to his dreadful suspense. Ever since, I have been quite at ease concerning Wagner’s financial situation. In the letter received to-day Wagner informs me that the address sent him is a false one and that no M. Pereyra lives in the house to which he was directed! Wagner had then made inquiries whether there were not some banker of that name in Paris, and actually found a certain “Pereire” who really had business relations with Saburow, *but—N. B., he had received no letter from him concerning Wagner*. What can be the meaning of all this? ! ! ! !

¹In 1859 Seroff arranged a number of Wagner Concerts in St. Petersburg.

If Saburow did not intend to pay, why did he promise to? If he had not written to Paris (which is entirely probable), why did he give me an address to send on by telegraph? All this is certainly no joke, but the dirtiest kind of deception! And that is the way this millionaire acts—this Chevalier of the Holy Alexander Nevsky Order (with the ribbon over his shoulder)—this unrestricted lord and master of the Imperial Theatre!

Wagner had informed Seroff of the sad state of affairs. After all that had happened he had little faith in Saburow. He wrote Seroff:

Still, even this does not depress me the most. The most displeasing feature is, that by reason of this turn of ill fortune I am entirely bereft of the genial mood which took possession of me on receipt of your first letter concerning Saburow. I cannot tell you what a strange commingling of pleasure and pain I felt on learning what you, in particular, had done for me. At first it almost seemed as though such successes ought to give me no pleasure, having been attained through your self-sacrifice, and you yourself—who gave me the information—being placed in the most disagreeable situation. True, it has often been my experience that only those sacrifice themselves who are themselves most in need of sympathy. I should have esteemed it a positively frivolous act to express to you my delight over your success. But your communication itself opened a prospect for me that I might soon be in a position to be useful to you.¹ I accepted the invitation to St. Petersburg, whatever opposition to it I may have felt, unconditionally. The thought that I might prove myself worthy there of your friendly zeal, and share with you in splendid successes, making you the partner in my St. Petersburg venture and myself able to grasp your hand in gratitude before all people—all this made a wonderful impression on my imagination. I delayed my answer to you, expecting to be in a position to inform you within a few days of the entire present success of your efforts for the improvement of my affairs—and this delay has cost me the pleasing satisfaction of knowing that you had received a letter of most heartfelt gratitude. Instead of this, you will get nothing out of me but signals of distress, miserable importunities, and complaints. Now then, what do you suppose that I think of our General?

Every word of our god [continues Seroff to his sister] is no less sacred to you than it is to me; and when you stop to consider to whom and by whom these words were written, your head may well, without need of further commentary, be turned much as my own somewhat weak-nerved head has been turned to-day. One should do whatever one does for the sake of the deed itself, without thought or expectation of gratitude, however nobly or delicately expressed. But, as I *know* that it would give Wagner pleasure to write me a heartfelt letter of thanks, I shall procure him that pleasure, cost what it may. Once more I am going to

¹At that time there was a project on foot, for whose success Seroff strove with the whole weight of his influence, to attract Wagner to St. Petersburg, to entrust him with the direction of the local symphony concerts, and to produce "Tannhäuser" on the Russian stage.

move heaven and earth. I shall get those 3000 francs for him, Saburow or no Saburow!

This letter convincingly shows with what unbounded devotion Seroff regarded Wagner not only as an artist, but as a man. A touch of tragedy is lent by the fact that he stood, with his enthusiastic Wagner propaganda, almost alone in Russia. The fiery rockets of his eloquence exploded without leaving a trace behind, without awakening even a prolonged echo. Seroff was fortunately sufficiently optimistic to pin his faith on the Russian public, else he might well have thrown up his hands in despair. He overlooked the circumstance that said public was then by no means ripe for Wagner's art. In one of his letters we read: "Here (in St. P.) the public is better, cleverer, more impressionable, than anywhere else in the world. On this—after a manner of speaking—virgin soil Wagner would speedily conquer a commanding position."

If Seroff had not cherished this hope, which unhappily was never to be realized, he would surely have lost all courage, and all the exhilaration of the combat would have evaporated. For the "guild"—as he soon discovered—in Russia could not be induced to support Wagner. The contemporary Russian newspapers were full of hateful and nonsensical attacks on Wagner, whom the writers (like others elsewhere) were determined to depict as a comical figure, and to make an object of ridicule in one way or another. Seroff defended Wagner—if the comparison be permissible—as a lioness defends her cub, against all the mean assaults with which the Russian musical press pursued him. For Seroff it was naturally most painful that even Stassow,¹ whose artistic judgment he had formerly prized above all else, had neither eyes nor ears for Wagner's art. To what degree he was irritated by the lack of critical discernment among the musical pen-pushers of St. Petersburg, is best to be gathered from his letters to his sister. These show us the youthful Seroff who always spoke his mind to his sister without the slightest constraint, and who gave free rein to his temperament even more recklessly than in his criticisms, which, truth to tell, can by no means pass for models of wise journalistic moderation. In one such letter there is to be found a diatribe directed against his dear colleagues of the musical press, which is thoroughly characteristic of Seroff. Here he says, among other things:

¹Vladimir Stassow (1824-1906), doubtless the foremost Russian historian of art and music of the nineteenth century, the later enthusiastic apostle of the so-called Neo-Russian School (Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Borodin, etc.).

I can easily believe that the imbecile "criticisms" of Wagner in the newspapers make you wild. In this matter I judge by my own feelings. How do you think I felt the other day on finding in the journal "The Northern Bee" (which also often does me the honor to pinch and prick me because I do not admire Warlamow,¹ and praise the Music of the Future), between an embroidery pattern and a receipt for buckwheat cakes (actually so, without exaggeration), an article by our dear countryman Damke concerning Wagner's Paris concerts. He ridicules him and jests about him in even sorrier fashion than S. [Stassow] and B. [Bulagrin]. Then he adds a would-be witty Parisian play on words: "La musique de Wagner est *vague* et *agace* les *nerfs*" (*vague-nerfs* = Wagner). Remember that Damke is considered an excellent connoisseur of music and really possesses some knowledge (though of a very pedantic and old-fashioned sort). All this hissing of the *worms* (one can't call them snakes, for that would do them too much honor) is horribly aggravating, of course, but what can one do? The strength of a single individual does not suffice to ward off every such attack. Not every sneeze is a token of health. With regard to Wagner we must console ourselves with the thought that he, in common with *all* great geniuses, is *quite beyond* the comprehension of the majority of his contemporaries. There are but a chosen few who can sympathize with him. Therefore, it is encouraging when one finds anywhere and at any time in the criticisms of the press a sensible opinion about Wagner. Indeed, that is most encouraging. All the rest is simply the machinations of the "crowd," that is, the majority of dullards and idiots who are totally wanting in taste, in judgment, and in understanding. It was La Bruyère who said: "Après l'esprit de discernement (and that means critical discernment, which is capable of evaluating genius) cela qu'il y a de plus rare au monde, ce sont les diamants et les perles." Schopenhauer, who was greatly pleased with this—all too true!—dictum, made this addition: "The lack of discernment herein deplored likewise discovered itself thus: that in every century, while that which was admirable in earlier times was honored, contemporary excellence was ignored and the attention due to it bestowed upon wretched makeshifts wherewith each century burdened itself but to become the theme of ridicule for the following. How were Mozart and Beethoven valued during their lifetime?—or Shakespeare himself?"

Now, the very fact that people are so slow to recognize genuine merit when it appears in their own time, is a proof that they neither comprehend, nor enjoy, nor truly appreciate, those approved works of genius *which they hold in reverence by reason of their prestige*.

With Wagner it could not be otherwise. Remember how, precisely thirty years after Beethoven's death, a musical ass, a thorough-paced blackguard, a wretched nonentity, published a pasquinade against Beethoven in which he enumerated the *composer's blunders* in musical grammar (when all grammars lie, in so far as they depart a hair's breadth from the construction laid down in Beethoven's music), and in which the Ninth Symphony is held to be "unworthy" of analysis as the abortion of a feeble understanding. And what happened? Pretty much all Ger-

¹Alexander Warlamow, author of the celebrated Russian song *The Red Sarafan*. For the rest, an insignificant composer. Lived 1801-1848 in St. Petersburg.

many—thirty years after the Ninth Symphony!—hailed this pasquinade with loud applause, and praised the *critical discernment* and the attainments of its author¹ to the skies. And when some few *effrontés* like Liszt, Bulow, Bronsart, your brother, and others, openly protested against this profanation, this defilement of the pedestal of one of the greatest geniuses of all time, we were looked upon as Don Quixotes, and our *loftiest* endeavors set down as the fruit of interested intrigue and the spirit of *partisanship*!!—So it goes everywhere in everything. So it is with Wagner. *But he will come into his own!*

This unshakable belief continually renewed Seroff's strength. Not for a moment did he swerve from his devotion to Wagner. Unhappily, he did not live to see the triumph of Bayreuth. That satisfaction would have attoned for all the annoyances and anxieties which he underwent for Wagner's sake.

When the rehearsals of Seroff's first opera, "Judith," were in full swing, and the composer was doubtless applying the final polish here and there to the instrumentation of the work, his labors were obstructed by an interruption which, though it gave him the keenest pleasure, would probably have been more welcome at any other time: Wagner came to St. Petersburg on invitation of the Philharmonic Society to conduct a series of symphony concerts.

During the period of Wagner's sojourn in St. Petersburg, Seroff forgot everything else in the world, his own opera not excepted. He went so far as cheerfully to neglect the rehearsals of "Judith." Instead of attending them, he sought to prepare the St. Petersburg public for his friend's music by three enormous articles on "Wagner and His Opera-Reform." In many other directions, too, he was unwearied in his efforts to smooth Wagner's path by any means in his power. His friendly self-immolation and self-effacement knew no bounds. He himself made translations of all the texts of the fragments of Wagner's music-dramas that were to be performed in St. Petersburg; he sought out the most suitable singers of both sexes and carried on the negotiations with them; for days at a time he did not leave Wagner's side, everywhere serving as his counsellor and interpreter. His own artistic personality was pushed completely into the background by his devotion to his friend. Touching this point, according to the "Memoirs" of the lady who later became his wife, he delivered himself as follows:

My inclination for Wagner was so disinterested that I did not in the least desire to play my compositions to him. He was not for a mo-

¹He alludes to the biographer of Mozart, Oulibischeff, whose essay, "Beethoven, ses Critiques et ses Glossateurs" (1857), excited general indignation.

ment to feel that our friendship laid any responsibility or obligation upon him. I had no intention of imposing any conditions on him. I was well aware that he took no interest in the works of other composers. He himself once turned our conversation to the subject of "Judith," on which, as he had learned, I was then working. He asked me how I had arranged the scenario—"In five acts, isn't it? First, populace; then, Judith alone; after that, in the camp, the murder, and triumphant return?" Point by point, he hit the mark. One day he entered the room where I was engaged on the instrumentation of the opera. He looked at the score, and read a few numbers through attentively. "Well, what do you say to it?" I asked.—"I knew very well that you have a complete mastery of instrumentation," he replied. And afterwards we never referred to the matter.

However, Wagner gratefully acknowledged Seroff's friendly attitude and the services he had rendered him. In "Mein Leben" he makes most honorable mention of his Russian friend:

I made his (Seroff's) acquaintance here in St. Petersburg when he was in the poorly paid position of censor of the German newspapers. Extremely neglectful of his outward appearance, sickly, living from hand to mouth, he first won my respect by his broad, independent outlook and love of truth, through which, united with an admirable understanding, he had grown to be one of the most influential and redoubtable of critics. This I discovered soon afterward, when requested by persons of eminence to exert my influence over Seroff to induce him to mitigate the bitterness of his attacks on A. Rubinstein, the object of their solicitous protection. On laying the matter before him, he explained the reasons for which he considered Rubinstein's activities as an artist, in Russia, so pernicious. I then begged that he would at least do me the kindness, as I did not wish during my short stay in St. Petersburg to be regarded as Rubinstein's rival, to cease from harassing him for the time being; upon which he exclaimed, with the violence of a morbid sufferer: "I hate him! I can make no compromise!" On the other hand, he entered into the most intimate understanding with me; he so fully understood me and my ways that most of our intercourse was carried on in a jocular vein, as we were in full agreement on all serious matters. Nothing could equal the solicitude with which he aided me in every direction. For the vocal extracts from my operas which were to be performed in my concerts, and likewise for my explanatory programs, he saw that the necessary translations into Russian were made. For the discovery of suitable singers he operated with admirable judgment. And for all this he seemingly found a rich reward in his assistance at the rehearsals and performances. Everywhere shone his radiant countenance for my encouragement and refreshment.

On Wagner's departure from St. Petersburg he presented Seroff with the score of "Tristan" in a luxurious binding with his portrait and the inscription: "Here, dearest friend, you have me as I am and work." The presentation of this gift was accompanied with humorously solemn ceremonial; Wagner escorted Seroff to

an armchair, sank on one knee before him, and handed him the book with a felicitous panegyric. For Seroff nothing in the world could have been the object of such loving care, as was this "Tristan" score.

In 1863 Seroff married a young Russian pianist, and spent the summer of that year in the neighborhood of Vienna, in Neuwaldegg near Dornbach, where he and his young wife took up their abode in a small summer cottage.

One day (so narrates the artist's spouse in her "Memoirs") Seroff literally flew into the room, excited, breathless, his face aglow with joy, and cried out to me, "*To-day Wagner will be our guest!*"—Heavens! I stood there with my heart in my mouth, as if rooted to the ground. In mad haste, Seroff began setting our two little rooms to rights. Until then we had thought them quite presentable. Now all of a sudden they appeared mean and poverty-stricken beyond all imagining. We arranged the furniture this way and that way and the other way, but it was of no use—the rooms looked just as shabby as before, even some few hastily gathered bunches of flowers could not conceal the fact. Before we had regained possession of our senses, hoofbeats resounded in our secluded lane, and almost at the same instant a magnificent equipage drawn by two horses came to a stop at the driveway. I was in the act of feeding a little song-bird that had flown into our lodging and had been our care for some days. Seroff rushed out to greet Wagner—a mist seemed to rise before my eyes. Without letting go of the birdling I followed with my gaze the meeting of the two friends. Now, they embrace—now, they are in the hall—the door flies open—my hand trembles, and the bird flutters down underneath the sofa—on the threshold stands Wagner. Seroff is all ready to introduce me: "My wife—" he could get no further; obeying an obscure impulse, I ran after the bird and crawled under the sofa. Wagner probably divined on the instant the mental calibre of the half-introduced Mme. Seroff; without hesitation he followed me, caught the bird, and gave it into my hand with a most amiable smile. When we had withdrawn from the scene of our first encounter, beneath the sofa, he turned with good-natured banter to Seroff: "I have already made the acquaintance of your dear wife"; then, laughingly threatening him with his finger, he added: "*Sapperlot!* your wife is certainly none too old!—So it's here you live, old friend!"

While Seroff was very animated, active, and mercurial, Wagner combined all these characteristics in a still higher degree. He could not sit still for a moment.

Wagner proposed that we should take a long walk in the woods, so we drove in his carriage on a lovely road into the mountains. Here his high spirits were uncontrollable. He tried to climb the trees, leaped, careered around and made fun like a boy. There was a hand-organ man playing a tune from "*Orphée aux enfers*," by Offenbach. Wagner gave the fellow a goldpiece with the assurance that the composer of the operetta sent it to him out of gratitude for the popularization of his melodies. The man's face was a priceless study!

Just before this visit to Seroff, Wagner had received the famous autograph letter from Ludwig II, who invited him to come to Munich and opened a prospect of the realization of all his artistic schemes. This explains the elevated mood of the fifty-year-old master, who, according to Mme. Seroff's statement, was veritably transformed into a youth.

In Mme. Seroff's "Memoirs" we read further:

In conversation with Seroff on his plans for the future, on the Munich theatre, on the revision of "Tannhäuser," the time passed until moonrise. Wagner bade a most affectionate farewell to Seroff, brought us back to our cottage, and rolled away, intoxicated with hope for the future and reliance in the present. Like a bright, irradiant Phœbus he vanished down the shadowy lane, that wrapped itself after his disparition in a mysterious silence and enchanted twilight. Through the shimmering foliage the diffident moon gazed down.

For a long time I stood with Seroff as if spellbound on the doorstep of our home, unable to readjust our scattered senses after the startling impressions of that day of wonderful experiences. Both were moved by a painfully bitter regret that the day was already over.

Seroff frequently met Wagner, and maintained the most amicable relations with him. Nevertheless, in Wagner's presence Seroff was always very taciturn, being wholly absorbed in following his friend's trend of thought, which was constantly changing its direction. Even more highly trained intellects than Seroff's were often hard put to it to follow Wagner. But the fact is, that Seroff possessed a peculiar faculty for animating Wagner to lavish his intellectual treasures. "The only musician of our time to whom I am inferior as regards the power of my thinking apparatus and my mental energy, is he—but he alone!" opined Seroff; "Before him I lay down my arms and feel myself altogether the weaker partner. That is the reason I am always so glad to see him. I admire him as a glorious phenomenon of generous Nature."

In the autumn the youthful pair returned to St. Petersburg. There a task was awaiting Seroff which was remote from his proper field of musical creation. His zealous and self-sacrificing efforts were not the least of the factors which had decided the directorate of the Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg to produce "Lohengrin." It was Wagner's special wish that Seroff should represent him at the rehearsals of the work on the stage of the Marien-theater. Seroff acquitted himself of this honorable commission to the best of his ability—certainly with unflagging enthusiasm and never-failing delight in his labors. The first performance took place on October 4, 1868, with good, though not overwhelming, success. Seroff himself was satisfied. He pub-

lished in the St. Petersburg "Journal" an open letter to Wagner containing a report on the première. The letter is of interest, inasmuch as it is the first to report upon the première of a Wagner opera in Russia (only in the municipal theatres of the Baltic provinces had "The Flying Dutchman" and "Tannhäuser" been given previously). According to the German translation it reads as follows:

My renowned Friend: Pursuant to your letter to the Director of the Imperial Theatre I had the pleasure, as your plenipotentiary, to conduct all the rehearsals of "Lohengrin," beginning in July. On October 4/16 "Lohengrin" appeared before a St. Petersburg audience with brilliant success. You have long known my fervent admiration for your creations; you know that I am untiring in the study of your most recent works, which, in my estimation, far surpass "Lohengrin"; hence you will not expect me to seize this opportunity to dilate on the beauties of this lyric drama which during the last ten years has not lost its position in the repertory of all the opera-stages in Germany and has conquered an undisputed place of honor beside the greatest masterworks.

And yet your success in Russia, albeit of somewhat tardy achievement, is an event of the highest importance both for the fate of the musical drama in our country and for the education of the public. This success, which was won along the whole line without opposition, appears well-nigh amazing in view of the heretofore hesitant and mistrustful attitude of the Imperial City with regard to your works; but it is an accomplished fact, and must be considered as marking an era in the history of Slavic art and civilization. You have a right to expect from me a full report concerning details of translation, *mise en scène*, and performance of your masterwork. I am happy to say that this report will manifest itself as favorable in every particular. The translation was made very intelligently by M. Swanzow. You may recall him from your Dresden period. I told you some time ago that he is one of your most enthusiastic admirers—he out-Wagners Wagner himself. He swears by the *verba magistri*, and adopts literally and unreservedly all your most adventuresome Utopias, even those which, in your own ripe judgment, can hardly pass without considerable modification. To this fanaticism he clings in his translation. It is scrupulously literal, the musical and prosodic inflection everywhere observed to a nicety, often, to be sure, so far as to sacrifice the beauty of the Russian verse. He invariably has an eye to the stage-presentation of the work, and in favor of the acoustic effect he renounces all claim to purely literary superiorities in his translation. This is self-abnegation of a sort. There are passages, however, such as Elsa's entrance scene and Lohengrin's marvellous narrative (end of Act I), in which his translation soars to heights of genuine poetry.

Your protagonist—the Orchestra—carried out its function admirably under the efficient direction of our excellent Russian Kapellmeister Liadow.¹ This latter, well-prepared for this trial of serious musicianship

¹Father of the composer Anatol Liadow.

by our operas of native origin, proved himself fully alive to the responsibility of his new undertaking. At the close of each performance he received a storm of applause from the entire house—a most unusual happening for our Kapellmeisters. I think it no exaggeration to assert that you yourself would have been satisfied with Liadow and our orchestra, with whose powers you are familiar since 1863.

With regard to the stage-performance, I must not seek to disguise the fact that the personnel of a Russian troupe can never completely penetrate the spirit of such an admirable German lyric drama. The wide divergences in taste and education between the two nations are, in such cases, too sensible, and can be abated only through a prolonged course of highly specialized training. In point of fact, all the faults of our stage may be traced back to inadequate education. Here there is no lack of natural endowment, or energy, or talent of every description, but they are all too primitive and uncultivated. Consequently, in the presentation of "Lohengrin" on the Russian stage, the absence of that mysterious primal strain of Germanic poetry which lends the entire ensemble of this mystic legend such a characteristic color, was keenly felt—at least by all who know the original. For me, that enchanting, ineffable illusion that thrilled me in Dresden and Vienna during the scenes between Lohengrin and Elsa was wholly missing. The energetic and martial scenes were possibly more brilliantly successful here than in Germany; but the tender, mysterious tones of the sentimental episodes were irretrievably lost. The contours appeared more distinct, with an approach to a facile prosaic realism. That, as you perceive, is quite remote from the "idealism" of Schiller, which finds such superlative expression in your music. Within these limitations, the performance was more than satisfactory.

Now follows a detailed criticism of the several exponents, after which he proceeds thus:

I will add a few words relative to the impression made by the opera on our audiences. We have reached the third representation. That is still not sufficient for an estimate of the definitive impression of so significant a work. But, as aforesaid, your victory over the Russian public was won without the slightest opposition at the first onset. Notwithstanding the slender sympathy of our theatregoers for the myths of the German middle ages, the auditors felt from the very outset the presence of a genius of the highest potency, of a poetical art-work of the "highest rank."

One does not attend a drama by Schiller or Shakespeare to "amuse" oneself. Just as little will those find their account in listening to a performance of "Lohengrin," who expected to see a merry stage-play accompanied by lightly-tripping music. However, there is here as in all large cities, alongside of a public that idolizes "La belle Hélène" and another host that regales itself on "Lucia" and "La Traviata," an audience capable of enjoying a serious work of art. Such an audience filled the theatre to capacity for "Lohengrin," and received your work with unaffected enthusiasm.

Respecting our musical criticisms—that is our weak point. Talented and educated representatives of this department are notable by

their absence. The sole praiseworthy feature of our press, whose color in most instances is a purely personal one, is a decorum which was long since forgotten in some other countries. Our press makes its decisions from conviction, which is frequently fanatical (mostly out of stupidity), but the pens of our journalists are never purchasable.

Withal, I found it interesting to follow the reports of our newspapers on "Lohengrin." Taken as whole, they form a concerted hymn of praise. Admiration is expressed for the grandeur and originality of this imposing work. The impression resembles that made on the general public. In this case, as in many others, we find a solitary exception. This obscure pen-pusher¹ tilts with visor closed (being probably ashamed to sign his name) as your declared enemy, and worships Schumann, Berlioz, Glinka, and a little band of inconspicuous Russian musicians. Upon you he declares war along the whole front, attacking you with inexcusable epithets which are the shame, not of his paper alone, but of the entire Russian press, while entangling their author in inextricable contradictions. Spiteful as he tries to be, he succeeds in saying precisely the contrary of what he intends, and wanders into blind alleys. All this can only excite a compassionate smile. Here an instance—while denying you a single spark of creative genius he finds, in *Lohengrin*, "Beethovenian" traits; he denies the presence of any originality whatsoever in your work, while admitting that your orchestration teems with original and delightful details. He seeks to prove your complete impotence as a musician, yet is forced to concede your merit in energetically and victoriously combating the abuses of modern opera. While endeavoring to discredit your efforts, and expressing himself contemptibly enough concerning your lightly-won successes, he nevertheless compares them to the achievements of Gluck.

As you see, it is the same story to which you have become accustomed in the German and French press. Such progeny of Zoilus does its utmost to defame you and belittle your triumphs—yet only demonstrates your greatness.

This frenzied hatred that they stir up in the press of all countries, is not the least among the agencies that spread your renown. As an accessory to your triumph it had to appear here, too. It is the tribute that must be paid to your great name. Where the light is strong, shadows will not be absent!

This rosy description of the success of "Lohengrin" by no means corresponded to the facts, but with Seroff one is accustomed to seeing the figments of his imagination accepted, in his moods of exaltation, as absolute verities. "Lohengrin" did not maintain its place on the repertory of the Marientheater; and full thirty years intervened before Wagner gained a comparatively firm foothold on the Russian stage. Whether Seroff himself later perceived how sadly he was mistaken with regard to the attitude of the Russian public toward "Lohengrin," is not known. But even supposing this to be the case, who could take it amiss

¹It was César Cui.

that he withheld the bitter truth from the friend he loved with such entire devotion?

In the Spring of 1869 Seroff, together with his wife and their little son,¹ again took ship at St. Petersburg for his beloved Germany. Munich, with its masterly performances of Wagner's works under Hans von Bülow and Hans Richter, was the first goal of their journey. Here Seroff heard for the first time the "Meistersinger" and "Tristan." These performances he reckoned among the most important events of his life. His enthusiasm for Wagner transcended all bounds. Wagner himself was then not in Munich, but living with Cosima von Bülow in Villa Tribschen, near Lucerne; this spot was, therefore, naturally the next objective of Seroff's pilgrimage. In Lucerne the Seroffs took up their abode for a considerable period, and their first excursion was to Villa Tribschen. The Russian pair, whose costumes were doubtless sufficiently fantastic—for twenty years Seroff had worn one and the same hat, of a shape and color baffling description, and his inseparable companion—were met by Wagner's factotum with the distrustful mien which is the customary welcome of "indigent pedestrians." All the more rejoicing was the reception of his Russian friend by Wagner himself. And Frau Cosima, now meeting Seroff for the first time, also welcomed the new arrivals with the greatest cordiality. Animated intercourse sprang up between Villa Tribschen and Pension Sonnenberg, where the Seroffs were quartered. Most frequently they were the guests of Wagner, but from time to time they had the honor of receiving the *illustrissimi* of Tribschen at their pension. During that summer Wagner was in an extremely optimistic mood. Mme. Seroff, in her "Memoirs," delights in recalling the enjoyable and inspiring hours that they spent together with Wagner. Many were the guests that season at Villa Tribschen. Seroff was naturally most desirous to be alone with Wagner, in order that they might engage in arguments on very various questions of art equally interesting to the master and himself. He asked Wagner's permission to visit him alone of a Saturday evening. "What are you doing with me?" said Wagner jestingly; "I rave against Judaism, and you force me to celebrate the Shabbas!"

On these (for Seroff) incomparable Shabbas evenings the two friends conversed about the Old German sagas and myths, the philosophical teachings of the ancient Greeks, and many topics connected with the arts in general. With great patience and zest Wagner interpreted to his friend the inner meaning of the

¹Later the celebrated portrait-painter.

Nibelung Trilogy, then nearing completion. He often played him the freshly composed scenes. Of the impressions so received, Mme. Seroff writes:

One evening Wagner was playing us the scene from his Trilogy where Erda makes her appearance, having just finished it. He played badly, occasionally striking the keys with his fist, and declaiming with a hoarse voice to the intricate piano-accompaniment, which was evidently a little too much for him; yet his nervous, animated style of declamation lent his delivery a power such as I have never known even the best primadonnas on the stage to put forth. So it can be understood that the author's interpretation, despite many imperfections, can never be forgotten, and aroused our sincere admiration. Wagner knew how to bring out the telling points in a truly inimitable fashion, whereas most actresses wholly miss them by reason of a characterless and indifferent delivery.

One day Wagner sent for Seroff. In Villa Triebtschen a house-rehearsal of "Rheingold" was to be held. All the male impersonators had arrived from Munich. We quote from Mme. Seroff:

We were permitted to witness the marvellous manner in which the author explained and illustrated the smallest details of each rôle to the several players. . . . People say that Wagner is insolent, rough and impatient during rehearsals. Perhaps! We have not seen him in the theatre, but here he was extremely amiable and only seldom interrupted the tranquil course of his conversation, although whenever a phrase was awkwardly delivered, the corners of his mouth twitched nervously. It is possible that Wagner, at an ordinary rehearsal, might scold the singers pitilessly, but here he controlled himself. Not until they had taken their departure did he throw himself with a most disgusted air into an armchair, and exclaimed, no longer capable of restraining his wrath: "Good God! What brainless creatures human beings can be!" In such cases Frau Cosima had a wonderful knack of pacifying Wagner with delicate feminine tact. Soon the wrathful master would smile once more, only growling to himself, "Such a pack of asses on this earth!"—"But you like them for all that, my boy," he once laughingly added, stroking our son's head. Evidently it had just occurred to him that the child had preferred, a short time previously, a donkey-back ride into the mountains to a festival dinner at Wagner's.

In spite of the enjoyable experiences in Lucerne and the happiness which the proximity of his idolized friend afforded him, Seroff was ill at ease. His physical sufferings were continually increasing, and he was often a prey to gloomy thoughts. Wagner and Frau Cosima, according to Mme. Seroff's testimony, were most sympathetically concerned about the disquieting condition of her husband.

The hour of parting came at last. Wagner was in an especially tender mood. He told us a great deal about his own illness at the time

when he was lying near to death in Venice. As a parting gift he handed Seroff a complete copy of "The Nibelung's Ring" with his portrait and the inscription "Also Tribschen!" As they embraced in fraternal farewell Wagner gazed at Seroff with sorrowful tenderness, and exclaimed: "Now the joys of Tribschen are at an end!" We drove away in tears. The shores seemed overspread with gloom, the lake menacing. We felt as if we had left the best part of our life behind us—as if we were orphaned. It was with a dim, dark foreboding that we betook ourselves yet further toward the south, even the climate of Switzerland being too harsh for Seroff's state of health. We never saw Wagner again.

In 1871 death put an end to Seroff's creative activities, together with the Wagner propaganda in Russia to which he had devoted himself with such whole-souled enthusiasm. And even if he had not given to Russian art his own works, which in certain respects were of considerable importance, he would, thanks to his energetic and efficient support of the ideas of the great German reformer of opera, have been assured of an honorable place, not merely in Russian musical history, but in that of the world at large.



In the course of his changeful career Seroff also had numerous interesting encounters with Franz Liszt. His descriptions of these episodes are for the most part very entertainingly and picturesquely worded. Some of these descriptions are worthy of being rescued from oblivion, containing as they do a graphic portrayal of Liszt's entourage in Weimar.

In 1858 a well-known music-lover and chorus-director, Prince Golizyn, left St. Petersburg on a trip to foreign countries where he proposed to give a series of "Russian" concerts. He requested Seroff to accompany him. The first stage of the journey ended in Dresden, and here Seroff heard "Tannhäuser," for the first time, which excited him to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. His itinerant reports on music, which are replete with clever and realistic observations on German music and musical life in Germany, read like a chain of variations upon a continually recurrent theme: "Ceterum censeo—Tannhäuser is the greatest art-work of genius that the human mind has yet created."—From Dresden Seroff proceeded to Weimar, to visit Liszt. He was welcomed by the lord of the Altenburg with such warm-hearted attentions that for an entire month he was unable to tear himself away from Weimar. During the whole time he lived in Liszt's house as his guest.

Much of interest with regard to his stay is found in his musical correspondence from Germany. But Seroff's private letters bear still more striking testimony to his exalted frame of mind. In one of these, dated July 17/29, 1858, and addressed to his sister, he writes:

Yesterday (Wednesday) Princess Lilly (Witgenstein) received some twenty-five guests—a company of artists, litterati (of whom there are plenty in Weimar), with their wives and other female relatives; the Russian priest Sobinin, whose daughter, although meagrely gifted, is a pupil of Liszt; that veteran among men of learning, Varnhagen von Ense, etc., all in full dress—the Princess is a “serenity,” and likes to surround herself with worldly pomp—almost *cravate blanche*.

When all were assembled, Liszt went up to the magnificent grand piano and obstinately insisted on opening the musical soirée with—now, what do you suppose?—the duet by Vollweiler on themes from “Russlan and Ludmilla,” assisted by Fröhlich (!). I warned Liszt that this leather-lunged clarinetist is a horribly poor player, but, as a matter of courtesy, he did not wish to deprive Fröhlich of the flattering gratification of tooting something with Liszt (!). Well, they started—maybe you remember how Fröhlich plays!! It was simply frightful! We all (one being Hermann, the son of the finest clarinetist in the world) listened and were horrified. Liszt did his best to cover up the “hissing” of the clarinet with the most wonderful arpeggios—but it was of no avail! While he played on and on with a smile of pitying resignation, he signaled me with his eyes to approach, and whispered in my ear, “Vous avez raison, Seroff—il est atroce!”—At last—it was really too much for him—he said: “Voyons—faisons une petite pause. The gentleman needs a little rest.” Liszt having thus arranged matters after a fashion, our tortures were at an end and speedily forgotten in the joys of the ensuing rich compensation.—Liszt soon sat down again at the piano (he had promised the Princess to make *much* music that evening) and played one of his Hungarian Rhapsodies. How I felt! It seemed as if I were again in the Engelhardt hall, or the Assembly of Nobles, in St. Petersburg, as I was in 1842—the same beatifically transfigured countenance of that “artist of all artists,” the same electrical, magnetical, magical ascendancy over his listeners, the same virtuosity to which nothing on earth is comparable, that knows no difficulties, and yet is but the *servant* of the thought. To me it is a matter for wonderment, how the concert-giving pianists (not even excepting Clara Schumann) can ever venture to present themselves to the public so long as such a *dæmon* of pianistic art exists in the world!—If there be a disparity between the Liszt of today and the earlier Liszt, it is, outwardly, *only* that he has grown gray, and inwardly, *only* that he plays even more enchantingly and composes incomparably better. (Yesterday, before the soirée, he played—entre nous—some fragments from his Legend “Die heilige Elisabeth”; the music is truly marvellous in its simplicity, the melody—*genuine*—to say nothing at all about the rest, for this “rest” is a matter of course in the works of *such* a brain.) When he had displayed the wonders of his Rhapsodie—sometimes replete with trills and figurations, while in other passages the piano was transformed into a “steel-ribbed Leviathan”

and with the piano vibrated Liszt, and all of us, and the entire hall—after all these wonders he arose; radiant with the aureole of his renown (you remember how his face is *transfigured* when he is *playing*), and was instantly surrounded by his guests, especially the ladies, who always and everywhere overwhelm him with compliments. People of our sort find it rather difficult to say anything whatever to him. Liszt is so *frightfully* clever, so surfeited with adulation, that any expression of enthusiasm must seem to him like a platitude. Still, I felt unable to renounce the pleasure of saying a word or two to him; he was really pleased, and pressed my hand heartily, remarking: "Trève de compliments, my *new old* friend!" (That naturally gives me a right to add, on my visiting-cards: "Amico di Liszt.")

Following the Rhapsodie, Miss Genast (the daughter of an actor and singing-teacher in Weimar) sang very charmingly two songs by Liszt—"Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh" (Goethe) and "Loreley" (Heine). He *himself* accompanied her. The "Loreley" is supremely beautiful. The fiancé of this young lady, a baritone by the name of Suppe (almost a tenor, very nice, but limps), sang two Hungarian songs and the Italian melody "Angiolina" by Liszt, accompanied by his betrothed, who also plays piano well. Then "he himself" played again, this time his Don Juan Fantasy (with a good many cuts—he omitted all the variations on "Là ci darem la mano"). Therewith ended the concert, for which many would have been glad to pay no end of money!—And now, what can one say to people who assert that Liszt has *forgotten* how to play on the piano, or to others who deny him a talent for composition!?

We supped at small tables in two rooms (champagne, truffles, ices). Liszt seated me in the place of honor, that is, next to himself (on his right sat the very pretty Miss Genast). Tell me, may I not rightly say of myself that I am dwelling somewhere on *Olympus*? I can't imagine how I ever got up there. After such a life, and the very loneliest hours in my workroom at Weimar, I shall find it hard to become accustomed to the incalculably inferior existence with K. G. Golizyn. There's quite a distance between him and Olympus.

Seroff's immense enthusiasm for the individuality of Liszt as a man and as an artist, seems not to have failed of response. Liszt was also partial to Seroff, otherwise he would hardly have kept him for a month as a guest in his own house. A letter written by Liszt on July 1, 1858, to von Lenz, the searcher after Beethoveniana, contains many flattering allusions to Seroff. The language of the original was French:

My acquaintance with Seroff was productive of great pleasure to me. The style in which he interprets Beethoven, penetrating his inmost thought, gave me a high opinion of his musical intelligence ("sens musical"). He is possessed of a spiritual sense of hearing that can be replaced by nothing else. We chat with him unconstrainedly, and understand each other. His arrangements of the last Beethoven quartets for two pianos are excellently made. If he will take a little further trouble with their revision, he can easily attain to the highest perfection. To this end we have played his arrangements over and over again—

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what a stupid word "play" is in such cases, unless, by the term "play," we understand an outpouring of soulful emotions, free as the forces of Nature. Notwithstanding all the difficulties one encounters in persuading a publisher to accept compositions for two pianos, I am going to try to get these arrangements by Seroff printed. They possess, in my opinion, a valuable significance for art by making propaganda for the study of the masterworks on which they are founded—these chefs d'œuvres which have hitherto had a far too limited circulation.

With this critique Seroff might well have been content; he doubtless would have been so, had it come to his knowledge.

In the course of a few years the relations between Liszt and Seroff were to suffer a slight derangement. In the summer of 1863 Seroff again met Liszt in Carlsruhe. The latter, who was conducting a musical festival there, saluted his Russian friend with open arms: "Mon cher tartare, soyez le bienvenu!"

Seroff had never ventured to show his own compositions to Wagner, whom he revered like a god. His association with Liszt was of a wholly different sort. Naturally, he was very desirous to hear what Liszt thought of his opera "Judith," which had recently obtained signal success in St. Petersburg, and the score of which he had brought with him. Liszt also was probably glad of an opportunity to examine the work of the Russian composer whose "sens musical" he so highly esteemed. He laid down the piano transcription (which had been made in part by the unpractised pen of the composer's wife) with the remark: "Mais où diable avez-vous pêché cette fichue d'écriture et ce clavier de l'autre monde!" and caught up the score. As to the further development of this scene we find, in Mme. Seroff's "Memoirs," a very vivid account.

Now the problem was, to play from the score. Masterly though the titanic musician's command of the orchestra was, he did not succeed in reading Seroff's complicated orchestration quite smoothly. Besides, the Russian text stood in the way of a complete understanding of the work. When he had finished the first act, Liszt exclaimed: "Comment? Tout un acte avec des juifs, les cruches en l'air demandant de l'eau? Cela n'est pas amusant, parbleu!"—So, when he began the second act, the whole spirit of the occasion was spoiled; a "wrong note" persisted in sounding; both player and composer were malcontent and groaning, so to speak, under a heavy burden. Seroff, without the least zeal or animation, explained the scenario; Liszt merely played "correctly"; evidently, Judith and Aura were fully as uninteresting for him as the weeping Hebrews. For the time being, however, the two friends remained outwardly calm. Suddenly Liszt stopped, and said: "Here the harps cannot make themselves heard."—"I have heard them precisely thirty-two times," replied Seroff, dissembling his irritation.—"I tell you, they cannot be heard—harps in the middle register always sound weak."—

"I have heard them thirty-two times!" repeated Seroff in an irascible tone.—After this incident it was of course impossible to go on playing. Liszt arose, and frankly acknowledged that the opera did not please him. Noticing the expression of embarrassment on our faces he continued with decision and, so it appeared to me, with the utmost sincerity: "This opera does not please me, it is not sufficiently interesting. It is only to my friends that I say just what I think; that is their privilege, to them I do not pretend."

Despite the "privilege" thus accorded him, this harsh and unflattering judgment from Liszt's own lips must have been a hard blow for Seroff. One can readily understand that the cavalier manner in which Liszt treated Seroff the composer did not fail of effect. This time the former warmth and cordiality refused to return, and Seroff left Karlsruhe without regret. A long time elapsed before he recovered from the blow and could resume his intercourse with Liszt on the earlier unconstrained footing.

(Translated by Theodore Baker)

IN BEHALF OF THE "POPULAR" ELEMENTS IN MUSICAL ART

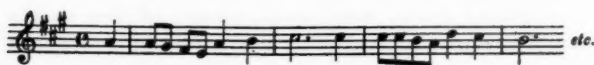
By EDWIN HALL PIERCE

POE'S tale, "The Purloined Letter," furnishes a good illustration of that peculiar blindness of a part of the human race—most especially of those who deal with minute inspection and analysis—in not seeing that which is most plainly before their eyes. After detectives had performed incredible tasks in searching every nook and cranny of the man's house, clothing and furniture, and had even waylaid him under the guise of footpads in order to search his person, the suspected letter was at last discovered, by an abler and fresher mind, to have been all the while in plain sight in his rooms, disguised only by being enclosed in a dirty and torn envelope.

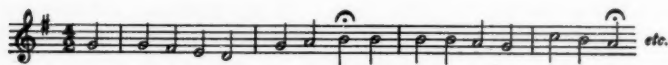
The particular purpose of this illustration will be more evident in the latter part of this essay. As its ultimate application to present-day music is of a nature that may arouse some hostility, the writer feels constrained to strengthen his case in advance by a brief historic résumé of the manner in which the access of the popular element into art-music has freshened and revived it when it was becoming moribund either from unintelligible complexity or from the mere reiteration of worn-out formulas.

The highly intellectual yet perversely soulless ingenuity of the Netherland contrapuntal school, which had spread into Italy, is a fact familiar to all students of musical history. The reformation wrought by Palestrina, infusing an element of reverence, sincerity and good taste into the sacred music of his time, is a thing which must be regarded with the greatest respect, but we shall not dwell on it at present, as it does not concern our subject directly. The first real infusion of the popular element of which we shall speak came at the time of the Reformation, along with the rise of the German chorale. The desire of the new congregations for voicing their religious emotions in united song was wisely encouraged by Luther, Calvin and other religious leaders, and the sudden demand for music suitable for congregational singing could not be fully met either from the sources of the older religion or from the original compositions produced at the time: it became necessary to draw also from secular sources, and this was freely done, with little regard for the incongruity of the original words of the tunes with religious ideas. Thus "Ich hört' ein

Fräulein klagen" became "Herr Christ der einig Gottes Sohn"; "Mein Gemüth ist mir verwirret" was transformed into "Herzlich thut mich verlangen" (familiar to many of our readers as No. 102, first tune, in the Hutchins Hymnal, to the words "O sacred Head, surrounded by crown of piercing thorn"). The choral melody known in America as "Old Hundred" came from French sources, through Geneva spreading to Germany and England in its more sanctified form. Its original words began "Il n'y a icy celluy Qui n'ait sa belle," and it is probable that the original rhythm of the tune was something like this:

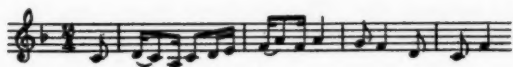


as several early arrangements of it show the influence of this rhythm. Its present form is in notes of equal length, like the majority of German chorales.



The efforts of organists to harmonize these chorales, either simply or with contrapuntal embellishments, practically gave rise to the modern science of Harmony, as distinguished from the older Counterpoint.

We must proceed: the plot of Wagner's "Mastersingers of Nuremberg," although fiction, is based on an actual historic truth—the struggle of the free and popular element in music against respectable hide-bound tradition, finally winning recognition. The same thing has happened again and again in musical art. Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsodies" are now considered almost among the classics, yet the melodies which he introduced in them are many of them from the humblest sources—popular songs and dance-tunes familiar in Hungary. Whether these are of original Magyar or original Gypsy origin is a disputed point, and we are not prepared to enter into the discussion; but in either case their origin and original use had in it nothing more essentially refined or artistic than the tunes of our modern "rag-time." The same remark applies to Brahms' "Hungarian Dances," which are transcriptions of Hungarian melodies communicated to him by the violinist Remenyi. Take them in their simple unadorned form and look at the matter in an unprejudiced light, is not



in every respect as good and as vital a musical theme as this?



(The last is from one of Brahms' Hungarian Dances, the first is from Kerry Mills' "Georgia Camp-meeting"—a tune which was one of the first popular examples of rag-time, and dates back about twenty-five years.)

One is easily misled by the pathos of distance. That which seems to us exotic and piquant may be, and probably is, as banal and commonplace in its own country and time as a Bowery dance-hall, a Sunday School picnic or a Ladies' Night at the lodge. On the other hand, had we been brought up in Budapest or Pressburg and were the popular ditties of contemporary America presented to us through the medium of a great artist's rendition, though we might feel that they were in some way alien to our existing musical tastes, they could never strike us as banal or dull—on the contrary, they would seem quite romantic and intriguing.

This fact has found recognition among several leading composers of recent times. Grieg, after a few half-hearted attempts to compose in the classical manner (as taught at Leipsic), plunged boldly into the use of Norwegian dance-rhythms and of song-melodies of the popular type, creating, as his own contribution to the cause, a type of harmonic treatment uniquely adapted to his subject-matter. Dvořák and Smetana did much the same thing for Bohemian music, Glinka for Russian, while Percy Grainger is still opening our eyes in a blithe and cheerful way to unsuspected beauty in old British folk-dances and other music of a popular origin. As I use this word "old," it occurs to me that there is a pathos of *time* as well as of distance. Why is it so much easier for educated musicians to appreciate what is good, only when it has become well-seasoned with age? I do not know—and it is doubtful if any one knows—the exact date of the original tune from which Grainger borrowed the theme of "Molly on the Shore," but for argument's sake, let us assign it to about the time of Bull, Byrd, or Orlando Gibbons. If so, do you imagine either of those worthies ever appreciated it at its true value? More probably they felt toward it very much the same amused contempt that

you or I do toward the "Dustpicker's Rag," or "I ain't got no use for sleep"!

Dvořák, when he came to America, had a strong insight toward the truth of this matter, and gave us some very enlightening counsel, though for reasons about to be mentioned he did not quite succeed in hitting the nail on the head. When he had been here long enough to gather up in his musical consciousness a few nigger-tunes and a little contemporary rag-time, he said to himself (presumably) "Go to now, shall I not write some truly American music?" and in course of time produced a notable Symphony, a Quartet, a Quintet, and a Sonatina for Violin and Piano, all in a new style supposed to be specially adapted to American taste. It is undoubtedly fine music, but, after all, more Bohemian than American, and more "classic" than either, as he uses the traditional Sonata-form with faultless observance of the traditional rules, thus "putting new wine into old bottles." After all, it is a well-trained Czech musician's idea of American ideas, just as Moszkowski's "Spanish Dances" are a German idea of Spanish ideas, or Rimsky-Korsakov's "Capriccio Español" a Russian idea of Spanish ideas. In order to be an American composer in the same sense that Grieg, for instance, is a Norwegian composer, some new young genius must arise who has heard and assimilated American popular music *both good and bad* from his earliest youth, and possesses both the instinct and the skill to produce what is beautiful merely by following out the type, plus his own personality. If I mistake not, too, although it is bold to predict, he will mostly confine himself to the shorter forms, rather than to the symphony and the sonata—not that I believe as some do that these forms are played out, but because the temperament of the American public is impatient of length and digressiveness, and particularly appreciative of conciseness and directness.

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Among our younger American composers we number several who have a *fleur* toward Indian music. This introduces a new and exotic element, but has really no popular appeal. Not one in a thousand of us has ever heard any *real* Indian music at first hand, and many of us have never even seen an Indian. (The present writer, for instance, in a lifetime of nearly fifty years spent in six different states of the Union, has possibly seen a dozen.) The negro race is far more familiar to us, and far more highly gifted with musical talent, and it is quite possible that

its influence may trickle into American music quite as that of the Gypsies has done in the case of Magyar music.

Thirty years ago, most young American composers were trying to write like Wagner. A few years later, and worship was divided between Brahms, Grieg, Dvořák, and the modern Russians, with a few casting admiring glances toward the French school. A few admired and imitated (in the line of sacred music) the English cathedral school, and almost succeeded in rivalling them in respectable dullness.

While all this was going on, and while essayists and musical critics were cudgeling their brains to predict the future of American music, hundreds of unknown little composers were writing real American music, unnoticed by the musical critics and the various little anxious groups of sedulous imitators of Wagner, Brahms, Grieg, and of French or Russian composers. It was the old story of blindness to the thing that was too evident. The only composers who were really new and really American were the popular composers, and that of the humblest and most vulgar type. But to recognize that fact was too bitter a pill for any well-bred and well-educated musician to swallow. As I read over the above words, I realize that they apparently do great injustice to several American composers of real genius and originality: one may mention, for example, MacDowell, in his "New England Idyls"—yet I am unwilling to delete the statement altogether, for the following reason; namely, that these American compositions of the highest order and most undoubted originality appeal only to a very limited class of hearers—far more limited, in fact, than the number of those who appreciate the older classics. It has been my experience and observation that (in general) the audiences most receptive of the highest class of modern American music, are those who are not familiar but actually somewhat *satiated* with the classics. Those who have a refined taste but seldom opportunity to gratify it, always show a preference for older classics, or at best for those American composers whose work is a more or less frank imitation of their style. Does not this show that these works, although we may point to them with just pride, are somewhat exotic, and limited in their appeal?

HARMONIC AND RHYTHMIC PECULIARITIES OF THE NEWER POPULAR MUSIC

Now let us glance at some of the new elements which have appeared in our popular music. They are important from two quite distinct points of view:—first, because (with certain ex-

ceptions which will be reckoned with toward the latter part of this article) they represent a gradual growth toward real artistic value in popular music itself; second, because it is not impossible that certain elements coming from popular music may have unexpected and important influence on art-music of the not distant future. (Witness, for instance, Carpenter, in his "Krazy Kat.")

Probably most of the so-called popular music published in the Victorian age has long since been used for kindling fires or for other humble purposes not needful to enumerate, but supposing you can by chance get hold of a few samples of it which have withstood the devouring hand of time—probably in some old country mansion where storage-room is plenty—you will be astonished to see how utterly banal and meager the music is, not only to the cultured musician, but even to the ears of the crowd to-day. Whole periods and sections are built up simply on tonic and dominant; even altered chords are conspicuous by their absence, and modulation confines itself within the narrowest and most obvious conventional limits. Not only harmony but rhythm is entirely without distinction, and accompaniment-figures show a large preponderance of the now discredited Alberti bass. When you have spent as long a time as you can endure in the examination of this insipid stuff, turn to some of the popular music of the present day, and notice the difference. Chords of the diminished seventh, French, German and Neapolitan sixths, augmented triads, the various devices of the organ-point and of stationary voices, are freely used; the minor mode is often in evidence, and modulation in general is much freer and bolder. More striking still is the use of syncopation—in fact so common as to be almost a mannerism—and this with certain new features which have no precedent in classical music, yet are undeniably legitimate artistic devices. We will pause here a moment to comment on certain of these features. It was a principle of the older counterpoint, pretty well observed in classical music, that of two tied notes, the first must be at least as long as the second: this gives a certain smoothness and dignity to the progression, but these qualities being obviously at a discount in modern popular music, the composers of the same, though probably more from instinct than from logic, threw this rule to the winds, and rhythms of the following sort are exceedingly common:

Irving Berlin

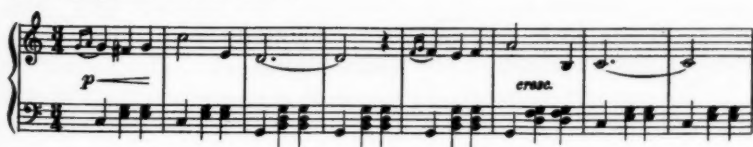


He is - n't much in the light, but when he gets in the dark

The present writer happens to have had considerable experience in taking down by ear, arranging and orchestrating the little incidental songs which stage comedians occasionally originate for their own use. When he was new to the task, it seemed at times as if the singer were declaiming prose rather than verse, the rhythm was so broken, and he would endeavor to record the melodic chain in a more flowing and perhaps more conventional form. He soon discovered, however, that this did not suit at all: what the singer wanted was exactly his own rhythm of declamation, and to attain the same meant a string of syncopations sometimes out-Schumanning Schumann. It may not have represented ideal declamation, as does Wagner's settings of the text in the "Ring" and "Tristan and Isolde," yet it was the actor-singer's own conscientious idea of the way he wished to deliver the lines, and, as such, was entitled to due respect. This shows that the syncopation in modern popular music is not always a mere mannerism, but an effort toward real artistic truth, of a humble sort. As an example of the tendency toward a fuller use of the resources of harmony, we select, almost at random, a few measures of "Broken-Hearted Blues" (by Klickman and Bargo, arranged by Hildreth [published 1922]):



Compare this with "La Prima Donna Valse" by Julien—a piece popular about 1860.



NEW ELEMENTS IN ORCHESTRATION

Progress has not, however, been confined to harmonic and rhythmic characteristics: there has arisen a new school of orchestration in popular music, as distinct from the old as Richard Strauss' or Debussy's orchestration is from that of Haydn and Mozart. For the most part, popular composers were not (and are not) highly-educated musicians like Kerry Mills, but were obliged to seek assistance both in the notation and the scoring of their compositions. Scoring having become a separate branch of the art, men like Bodewalt Lampe, R. E. Hildreth, Von der Mehden, Charles N. Grant—(we name these as first occurring to us, by no means implying that there are not many others equally worthy of mention)—have redeemed their task from being merely the perfunctory one of a hack "arranger," throwing into it the skill and the fine perceptions of artists. It was a difficult task, and it might seem almost a thankless one: the make-up of the orchestras for which they were compelled to write was most meager—when "full" (bless the mark!) they consisted of 1 flute, 1 oboe, 2 clarinets, 1 bassoon, 2 cornets, 2 horns, 1 trombone, snare and bass drums—rarely tympani—and the usual strings, but in very scant numbers, with the possible addition of saxophone, xylophone, and certain other modern novelties on occasion. But, in point of fact, they knew that only in the rarest cases would the full instrumentation be used: it was necessary therefore to arrange in such a way that a fairly acceptable effect might be produced from what we may term a *defective* orchestra. This was actually accomplished: first, by treating the instruments individually rather than in mass-groups; second, by depending on the much-overworked piano to remedy the lack of fullness and cohesion; third, by a very clever system of "cross-cueing" (see Gaston Borch's "Manual of Instrumentation," Chapter IX), which we have not room to explain here in detail.

As an example of very clever scoring for this very limited orchestra, we give (in short score) a few measures from "The Crocodile" scored by R. E. Hildreth. (The composition itself is by Otto Motzan and Harry Akst. These worthy artists are quite unknown to me, aside from this one piece, and it is quite a puzzle to picture how they could have coöperated with each other, as the little composition seems to have a unity which would argue an origin in one single brain.)

In Behalf of the "Popular" Elements in Musical Art 477

Moderato assai

Oboe or muted Trumpet

Clarinets

Strings

Più mosso

f Tutti

Picc.

Picc. (2d time only,) in octave with Xylophone

1st Viol. & Clar.

2d Viol. & Violas

Bass & Trombone

The tone-color of the Saxophone seems to be a favorite with the younger generation—somewhat of an anomaly, as its quality is sombre rather than gay: when two or more saxophones are used with independent parts, the sonorousness is of a somewhat organ-like character, in fact. The part assigned it is much like that of a 'Cello. It contrasts beautifully with rapid passages on the Xylophone, and has been so used on occasion.

The Hawaiian "Steel Guitar," while it has seldom been actually introduced into the orchestra, has left its influence in the use of certain glissando effects, for instance:

glissando

The Trombone has been wrested from its sublimely dignified position and made a sort of comedy-instrument by the use of grotesque glissando effects.

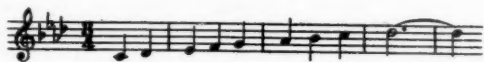
The percussion-instruments in the hands of the drummer have been greatly multiplied and in many cases improved: the Bells, Xylophone, Marimbaphone and Cathedral Chimes, though often used without good judgment, have introduced new and legitimate artistic possibilities. The same may be said of certain new forms of mutes for the brass instruments.

The numerous repetitions so much in evidence in dance music are now often redeemed from monotony by a change in orchestration:—the "first time through" the violin may have the melody; the "second time through" it may be given to the cornet, for instance, while the violin plays a counterpoint of entirely new material. Similarly, it sometimes happens that a theme will appear on the bells, with a light accompaniment: on its repetition *tutti* the drummer will turn from the bells to his usual snare and bass drums, *ff*—a simple but most effective device.

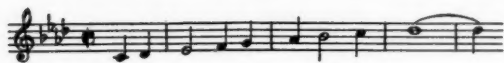
In popular music of the Victorian age, the 'Cello was used chiefly to double the Bass: at present it is used more largely in the tenor register for principal or subsidiary melodies. All these things represent a real and vital advance.

SOME SLIGHT MISGIVINGS

It would be a pleasant task if the writer could rest content with telling the good that is happening to American music through the working of the popular element, but a fair-minded critic feels impelled to look also at the other side. Syncopation has been so overdone that the popular taste finds music a little dull without it: hence have appeared certain blasphemous caricatures of some of our most admired classical melodies. The feeling for triple rhythm seems to be obsolescent among the musically uneducated: the waltz no longer charms as it did a generation ago. I have heard a young girl of average mentality sing a waltz-song and actually change the rhythm from



to



The drummers in dance-orchestras of the type which seems most popular with the public, habitually disregard the carefully-

written part made by the arranger, and substitute a mere barbarously-monotonous pounding on each beat of the measure, interspersed by noises with the various other percussion-instruments put in here and there according to their own perverse fancy, often not even with any rhythmic feeling.

I have purposely left to the last a subject which many would consider an important if not a fatal defect in the popular music of the day—namely, the vulgarity and banal doggerel of the words of the songs. It may surprise the reader that I am disposed to take the rôle of apologist rather than of the "devil's advocate." It is the purpose of Art to serve as a self-expression: good taste and even morality have nothing to do with it. If a composer happens to be religious, he may write sacred music with sincerity, and voice the sentiments and appeal to the feelings of the religious; if he has a refined taste in poetry, he may compose music for the lyrics of Browning, Heine, Verlaine, and will find audiences "fit though few"; but if he would win the ears of *hoi polloi* he must voice their feelings in their own language. In any one of these three cases, he may be a bungler, a skillful hack writer, or a rare and consummate artist. Shakespeare's lyrics, as found in his plays, are not *all* of the most refined type—for instance, one containing these lines:

For she had a tongue with a tang,
Would cry to a sailor, "Go hang":
She loved not the savour of tar nor of pitch,
Yet a tailor might scratch her where-e'er she did itch, *etc.*

He knew better than to put ideal poetry into the mouths of essentially vulgar characters.

We may rightly hope, without doubt, that with the growth of good morals and good manners popular music may at last exhibit a more refined taste, but until then, let us be thankful that it at least represents frankly the feelings of the masses *as they are*, for is it not to that extent, and *for the audiences for which it is intended*, a real though perhaps round-about road to good art?

Stephen Foster, in his day, wrote genuinely popular music—the words as well—which could scarcely have had its origin in any country but America or in any age but his own. He had the gift of simplicity without triviality. But would songs like his succeed in popular appeal to-day? There is a certain wistfulness and pathos about them—for example, in "Old Dog Tray," "Nellie was a lady," "Massa's in the cold, cold ground" which have been replaced in this day by a frank and animal eroticism, a

ribald hilarity or a cold cynicism afraid of being thought sentimental. I take no pleasure in making this statement, yet why blind our eyes to the truth? We have high authority for the statement that men do not gather figs of thistles. Perhaps we may take some comfort in the thought that at least our present-day popular music is free from the vice of hypocrisy. But it is not our purpose to lead the course of this discussion into the realm of manners and morals—we merely wish to see facts clearly, like a naturalist observing some particularly unpleasant bug through the microscope.

COMMERCIALISM AND ARTISTIC THIEVERY

Possibly there is no one thing which irritates musicians of the better sort so much, in regard to the trivial music of the day, as the frantic devices and immense expenditure of money on the part of publishers of the baser sort, in the effort to foist unworthy wares on the public. The writer has personally known cases where they even descended to bribery of band leaders, etc. Such courses are obviously without defence, yet in regard to the legitimate spending of money for advertising, it should be remembered that they are dealing in a very perishable commodity—the vogue of a popular song being so brief—and they are not to be blamed for using extraordinary means for commercial success. When Schumann's works were first published by Breitkopf & Härtel, they are said to have lain like lead upon the shelves for several years, yet afterward they became among the best sellers, and have so continued. They could well afford to wait, but if a popular song should "lie like lead upon the shelves" when first published, it would certainly continue to lie there until baled up as waste paper. Hence the hurry.

The theft of themes from Mendelssohn, Chopin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Wagner, Beethoven, Puccini, Dvořák, Liszt, likewise comes in for condemnation as something highly unethical. These appear usually in a mangled and burlesque form, but while the present writer has no sympathy with such procedure, his objections are not on the score of plagiarism, but on the score of good taste. To take that which is sacred because of its beauty and present it in a ludicrous or vulgar light is to make the world poorer, not richer, and give purposeless offence to all those who appreciate the beauties of the original form. However, a plagiarism, truly so called, is an attempt to pass off as one's own the mental property of another, whereas the main point of this objectionable borrowing is to burlesque that which is already familiar. If it were not

already familiar, there would be no burlesque. A so-called composer who takes Rubinstein's "Melody in F" and converts it into rag-time by filling it full of syncopations, is not doing it in the expectation that people will credit him with writing something original, but because he thinks people will be amused with the odd change he has made in something they knew already. The same thing is well known in literature. Perhaps not many of our readers care for Kipling's cynical little poem beginning

If the led striker call it a strike,
Or if the public call it a war

which is an obvious and intentional burlesque on Emerson's "Brahma":

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he's slain

yet no one has ever accused him of plagiarism on that account.

* *
* .

It is said that an Oxford professor was once led to dip into "Alice in Wonderland" because it was actually written (though as a pastime and under the nom-de-plume of Lewis Carroll) by a fellow professor of mathematics. After a few pages, he remarked that while it seemed well-written, he could not make out just what the author intended to prove! For fear this perhaps somewhat discursive little essay may leave a similar doubt in the minds of certain readers, I will take occasion here to explain that it is written in the hope, not indeed of converting cultured musicians to a liking for popular music, but for the purpose of replacing an unreasoning and indiscriminate dislike by an intelligent and sympathetic understanding. At least we may commend to them the words of Terence:

Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto.

A PASTEL BY LA TOUR : MARIE FEL

By J.-G. PROD'HOMME

AMONG the admirable pastels by Quentin de La Tour, rescued, after a century and a half of tribulation, from German pillage—amidst these likenesses of abbés, financiers, farmers of revenue, philosophers, artists, ladies of fashion, done in crayons by the “painter to the King,” and now sheltered by our Parisian Louvre till such time as they may be restored to the Musée Lecuyer of Saint-Quentin, there is a feminine face which attracts one like an enigma. In this gallery of the most final end of the eighteenth century, it sets one dreaming of some fair Levantine or Circassian slave, with its ardent oriental eyes like twin halves of an almond and of heart-thrilling warmth, its rather long and slightly upturned nose, its fairly large mouth surmounting a chin of regular curve which makes the contour of the face a perfect oval. The unpowdered hair is hardly concealed by a bluish gauze—doubtless a coiffure for the Opéra—which is slightly inclined toward the right temple and held in place by a golden ribbon set off, close to the left temple, by a red flower, at the point where the headdress crosses the forehead obliquely.

This portrait, into which the artist threw all the passion that he felt, during the last thirty years of his life, for his “divinity,” is that of Marie Fel, who, both in the theatre and on the concert-stage, was the cantatrice most acclaimed by the Parisian amateurs of the eighteenth century, together with her comrade and quasi-compatriot, Pierre de Jélyotte. It was Cahuzac who wrote in Diderot's *Encyclopedie*:

At the present time, we rejoice in a *chanteur* and a *chanteuse* who have carried taste, precision, expression and facility in singing to a pitch of perfection which, before them, had neither been anticipated nor thought possible. To them art owes its greatest advancement; for it was doubtless to the possibilities which M. Rameau divined in their brilliant and flexible voices that opera is indebted for those notable numbers wherewith this illustrious composer has enriched French song. Minor musicians at first revolted against it; sundry amateurs of the earlier style, because they knew no other, opposed the adoption of certain difficult and brilliant features of Italian song by a language which they considered unsuited for them; some narrow-minded folk, whom every innovation alarms, and who fancy in their self-complacency that



Marie Fel.

(After the pastel by Quentin de La Tour in the Louvre.)

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the very limited scope of their knowledge is the *nec plus ultra* of artistic strivings, trembled for the taste of the nation. But the nation laughed at their fears and disregarded their feeble outcry; carried away by delight, it listened enraptured, and its enthusiastic plaudits were divided between the composer and the executants. The talents of a Rameau, a Jéliote and a Fel were, of a truth, well worthy of being conjoined. It would appear that posterity will make scant mention of the first, not to speak of the other two.¹

In 1733, at the age of fifty, Rameau brought out his first opera, *Hippolyte et Aricie*, at the Académie royale de musique. Almost at the same time (June the 1st) Jélyotte made his début in *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines*, by Colin de Blamont; Marie Fel followed next year, on October the 29th, in the rôle of Venus in La Coste's *Philomèle*, which had been revived ten days before. She was a pupil of the wife of the painter Van Loo, née Christine Somis, who came to Paris the year preceding, and whose "night-ingale" voice was highly appreciated by music-lovers. Before the end of the year she appeared as Electra in Campra's *Iphigénie*, in which she was an understudy of the Petitpas, and throughout the winter she was "liked better and better," as the editor of the "Mercure de France" declared in December, 1734. Meanwhile, she was laying the groundwork of her reputation as a singer before the audiences at the Concerts Spirituels in the Tuileries, who bestowed "much applause" upon her at a concert on All Saints' day two days after her début at the Opéra, and praised her "accuracy of pitch" in the execution of motets by Mondonville, Lalande or Mouret, in which she took part with "la Dlle. Petitpas" and "le sieur Jélyotte."

Marie Fel, at the time of her début in Paris, was exactly twenty-one years old, having been born at Bordeaux, not in 1716, the date generally accepted, but in 1713, on October 24th, and not baptized until the 31st at the church of Saint-André, as the "legitimate daughter of Henry Fel, organist, and Marie Devacle, parish of Sainte-Eulalie."

Henry Fel already had a son, born in 1694, whom we shall meet again further on as a baritone at the Opéra, which he had no doubt joined before his younger sister. The daughter and the sister of musicians, the future star of the Académie royale studied music at a very early age. Her youth was probably spent at Bordeaux until the day when some "recruiter" for the Prince de Carignan, then master of the destinies of the Opéra, came to carry her away from her family and engage her;—unless it happened

¹Encyclopédie, Vol. III (1751), p. 145, art. CHANTEUR.

that she simply followed her brother to Paris, in order to finish her musical education there.

For several months after her début, while filling the subordinate rôles reserved for débutantes, her success was augmenting from day to day. On March 23, 1735, before the Easter vacation, she "sang for the actors," in *Omphale* by Destouches, an ariette such as it was then the custom to interpolate in the midst of any and every lyric tragedy merely for the pleasure of winning applause for some singer or cantatrice in favor with the public. At the reopening (May 5th) she played in the prologue of the *Grâces*, an "heroic ballet" by Royet Mouret, the rôle of Cupid. From time to time she also appeared in the Concerts Spirituels, where she became one of the soloists, singing "with equal accuracy and precision," according to the naïve and stereotyped phrase in "Le Mercure," the motets then in vogue. It seemed as if nothing could tear her away from Paris, where, from her first appearance, she had won universal favor—when suddenly, on June the 18th, she sent in her resignation from the Académie royale. Immediately the administration of the Royal Household, in whose department the Opéra belonged, addressed to Director Thuret the following letter, reminding him of the ordinance of 1713, by which actors were required to give six months' notice before leaving:

Versailles, July 20, 1735.

M. THURET, Director of the Opéra.

In the absence of M. le Comte de Maurepas I have laid before the King the application of Mr. and Miss Fel, who ask permission to resign at once from the Académie Royale de Musique. His Majesty desires absolutely that no actors should be permitted to retire without applying for discharge six months beforehand, and, consequently, you must not grant the discharge requested by Mr. and Miss Fel under any pretext whatsoever.

I remain, Monsieur, your obt., etc.

But, none the less, the ordinance gave way before the two renegades. We must presume that Marie Fel already had some powerful protector—was it not a certain Masson de Maisonrouge, whom we shall meet with again very soon, a great amateur of young ladies of the Opéra?—for, after an appearance at a Concert Spirituel on February 2, 1736, she rejoined the Opéra at the close of Lent with a salary of 1200 livres (instead of the 1050 which she had previously received), besides a "bonus" of 300. Evidently, Director Thuret needed her in maintaining his repertory.

What was the motive that induced Marie Fel to abandon the stage so abruptly? Is it at this period that we should fix her

sojourn at Amiens, "at the time when M. Chauvelin was the intendant," and when M. de Maisonrouge was the receiver of taxes for the district? It is possible. Fifty years thereafter the cantatrice herself made an allusion to this little episode in her artistic career; and Police Inspector Meunier, at the end of his report on "The present Status of the Actresses of the Opéra," recalled it in 1752. At the very time of her reappearance in Paris, the youthful *bordelaise* became a member of the Queen's Concerts (*Concert chés la Reine*), in which she was long one of the best factors. These musical entertainments had been devised to replace the Court Assemblies (*appartements*) of an earlier period; five or six times a month the "royal chamber-musicians" and the "cantatrices of the Queen's Concerts," assembled under the superintendence of the acting theatre director for the current half-year, presented, act by act, entire operas borrowed from the repertory of the Académie de musique, and more especially from that of the aforesaid directors. After all, it made little difference to Marie Leczinska whether they supplied her with classic operas by Lully, or others by Destouches or Colin de Blamont, and she hardly discriminated between them. "The Queen says that she loves music," writes the Duke of Luynes, "and in fact there are some operas which please her, and some little tunes for the *vielle*; but she is still fonder of *cavagnole*,¹ although she does not admit it."²

The representation of an opera before the Queen generally continued through two or three sessions. Thus, on February 13, 1736, they finished the performance of Lully's *Thésée*, which was begun on the 6th and continued on the 8th. Marie Fel, after having played her rôle in the opera, sang for the first time in these private concerts in Mouret's *Le Triomphe de l'Amour*; on the 20th and 22d she appeared in *Les Indes galantes*, by Rameau, and at the end of the month in *Omphale*.

She was again seen at the Tuileries on March 16th, together with Jélyotte; after this, at the Opéra, at the reopening which followed the recess during Lent, she reappeared on April 10th in *Les Indes galantes*, Rameau's "heroic ballet," whose première had occurred the year preceding during his absence. The cantatrice, "whose voice gave much pleasure," as "Le Mercure" laconically observes, "sang the principal rôle in the first entrée with applause."

For several years she was still entrusted with only secondary rôles in new pieces or in "revivals" in the repertory. But they often let her sing detached numbers, either French or Italian, and

¹A game of chance, played with balls.

²M. Brenet, "Les Concerts en France sous l'ancien Régime," pp. 170-171.

short songs, in which she excelled. And rimesters were already addressing her in gallant little poems such as the following:

On dit que dans les Thrace un chantre harmonieux
 Par les doux sons d'une voix admirable,
 Arrêtoit des torrens le cours impétueux;
 Mais ce rapport est une fable.
 Je connois un prodige encor plus merveilleux
 Que tous ceux que nos bons ayeux
 Nous recontent de leur Orphée.
 Une Syrène aimable, une touchante Fée,
 Par son art inspiré des Dieux,
 Par les accords charmans d'un chant mélodieux,
 Fait sentir ce qu'Amour eut jamais de plus tendre,
 Enchaîne tous les cœurs, ravit tout les esprits,
 Et le plus sémillant marquis
 Deux heures sur un banc est doucement assis
 Et presque muet pour l'entendre.
 Mais ce n'est pas assez pour enchanter Paris;
 Elle a forcé la jalouse Italie
 A lui céder la couronne et le prix
 De l'Art divin que les *Lullis*
 Ont échauffé de leur génie.
 Ces faits chez la postérité
 Portant tout l'air de songes,
 Passeront pour mensonges:
 Ils sont pourtant la pure vérité.

J. B. GUIB.

Autre Vers d'un Homme du Monde

Sitôt que le soleil paroît à l'horizon,
 On voit les astres disparaître;
 L'éclat de leur souverain maître
 N'admet point de comparaison.
 FEL, connoissez votre avantage,
 Votre destin est bien plus doux:
 Car vous partagez notre hommage
 Lorsque l'amour chante avec vous.¹

Encouraged by her swift successes, the young cantatrice even tried her hand at composition, which she may have studied with her brother after having learned the elements from her father, the Bordeaux organist. On the 18th of April, 1737, she obtained a general concession for nine years, authorizing her to "have printed and engraved, and to publish, Italian Airs and Ariettes with accompaniment . . . either such as she has executed or such as she will execute in the future." By virtue of this concession she published an air by Porpora, *Senza la cara sposa*, under the

¹Quoted by Grégoir, "Les Gloires de l'Opéra, Vol. II, pp. 160-161.

title: *Air italien, avec accompagnement chanté au concert des Thuilleries et à l'opéra par Mademoiselle Fel. Gravé par le Sr. Hue. A Paris, chez Madame veuve Boivin. . . . Se vend à l'Opéra. Avec privilège du Roy 1737.*¹

Beginning with 1739, the principal rôles in new works and in the revivals of earlier "hits" became her portion. She assumed successively the rôles of Hébè in Rameau's ballet, *Les Fêtes d'Hébè*, Sangaride in Lully's *Atys*, and Hézione in the lyric tragedy by Banchet. Formerly contenting herself with the rôles of Cupid or Venus in the prologues of operas and ballets, she is now entrusted with two or three different characters in the *pièces à tiroirs* (medleys) that formed the great majority of contemporary compositions. She it was, too, who assumed the leading rôles of Rameau as they came out—in *Zaïs*, *Naïs*, *Zoroastre*, *La Guirlande*, *Les Surprises de l'Amour* (in which she presented her last "creation," on May 31, 1757), in *Titon et l'Aurore* by Mondonville (which, thanks to her and Jélyotte, attracted full houses for several months), in *Le Devin du Village* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (in which she played the part of Colette inimitably), and, above all, in that Languedocian pastorale which Mondonville, the ancestor of the provincial poets (*félibres*) and himself both poet and musician, also presented on the stage with three quasi-compatriots, Fel, Jélyotte and Pillot—the pastorale *Daphnis et Alcimadure*.

During the twenty-five years that she spent at the Académie royale de musique, Marie Fel took part in more than one hundred first representations or revivals.² Her salary as prima donna had reached 3000 livres, plus 1000 livres "bonus," at the time when she sent in her resignation. She obtained a pension of 1000 livres, plus an annual bonus (*gratification*) of 500. The minister of the King's Household granted her this "distinguished treatment" in a flattering certificate which he sent at the same time to the Directors of the Opéra, Rebel and Francœur:

Versailles, April 9, 1757.

To Mad^{elle} FEL.

The Services which you, Mademoiselle, have rendered to the Académie Royale de Musique with public applause, have earned you distinguished Treatment; and as you have requested and obtained your Discharge from the month of March on, you are hereby assured of a

¹The National Library at Paris still owns two *Arie della Signora Marie Fel*, in manuscript. The first is dated in *Parigi 1753*. It is accompanied by the string-quartet and flutes. Both are incomplete. However, one can judge of the taste of the fair singer-composer by the first piece, all in light coloratura with violin-accompaniment.

²See the list of these rôles in Compardon, "L'Académie royale de musique," Vol. I, pp. 309-312.

retiring pension of 1000 livres, and of an annual *Gratification* of 500l., I have, in consequence, written to Messrs. the Concessionaires of the Privilege of the Opéra; but I expect that, when necessary for the Theatre and agreeable to the Public, you will fulfill the Promise to serve according to your ability. You are aware, Mademoiselle, of the sentiments which I cherish for you.¹

The beneficiary did not have to be begged to remain during the time necessary to obtain a substitute. For several months she had been teaching the art of singing to a young girl of seventeen whom Mlle. Clairon was coaching as an actress; on December 15, 1757, Sophie Arnould, destined to attain a somewhat clamorous celebrity, made her début in Mourrot's *Les Amours des Dieux*; and on the 13th of April following she assumed the place of her instructress in the principal rôle in *Enée et Lavinie*, by Fontenelle and Dauvergne, after having appeared, with her, in the secondary rôle of Venus. In Mondonville's *Les Fêtes de Paphos*, revived on May the 9th, Marie Fel played, in the second scene, the part of Érigone, and Sophie, in the third, that of Psyché; finally, both appeared together for the last time in *Proserpine*, the pupil taking the principal rôle, and the teacher the more modest one of Aréthuse. "The acting of Mlle. Fel (says 'Le Mercure') could not mend the lifelessness of the part; but her light and brilliant voice always has a new charm."

This representation of *Proserpine* took place on November 14, 1758. Marie Fel could leave the lyric stage without solicitude; in Sophie Arnould she had found an understudy worthy to succeed her. Thenceforward she appeared only in the Concerts Spirituels at the Tuileries and in her capacity of royal chamber singer and court singer. In the former she soon stood at the head of the *dessus* (sopranos), maintaining this position until 1770, the year in which "Les Spectacles de Paris" mention her for the last time. Thereafter her name reappears in the above compilation for the years 1782 and 1783 among the chorus singers; but this has reference to her niece, who was her pupil and heir. During thirty-five years, save some few interruptions caused either by journeys or by illness,² she was one of the most indefatigable and cherished

¹Arch. nat., Maison du roi. A copy in the Arch. de l'Opéra, mss. 2479, Vol. I, pp. 190-191. The letter of same date to the Directors of the Opéra, is couched in very nearly the same language.

²Such interruptions occurred in 1746 and 1750. In 1746 she reappeared at the Opéra on October 12th, after "a long and dangerous illness," says "Le Mercure." "Her voice is more beautiful than ever; we shall say nothing about the taste with which she sings—we could say nothing new for anyone."—In 1760 she sang at the concerts on December 8th and 25th, after a "very long illness" which had "deprived the public" of her presence. "She evoked great delight (so says the chronicler); Mlle. Fel sang in a

artists of the concerts at the Tuileries. To enumerate the sacred songs in Latin, Italian or French which she interpreted there, and the longer motets with chorus in which she sang the recitatives, would be to write a compendium of the Concerts Spirituels during their most brilliant period. It will suffice to mention some of the works which, thanks to the names of their authors, were made the object of somewhat detailed comment on the part of contemporaries.

During the directorates of Rebel, Reyer, Mondonville and Dauvergne, Marie Fel was the leading interpreter of the motets which they directed; in them she sang, "with an emotion equally touching and sublime, the grand *tableau* of the *Venite adoremus*, which will ever form the basis of Mondonville's reputation," and the editor of "*Le Mercure*" holds her up as a model for a débutante, Mlle. Étienne: "Let her listen, let her study, let her incessantly admire Mlle. Fel," he writes. "There are perfect models on which alone great talents can be formed."

On April 17, 1753, shortly after the representations of *Le Devin du Village*, in which Fel and Jélyotte added to their laurels both at court and in the Opéra, we encounter the début of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in sacred music. Mlle. Fel sang "as she alone knows how to sing" a *Salve Regina*—"composed for her," says Rousseau himself in his "Confessions"—by the author of *Les Discours de Dijon*. "In this motet there have been discovered much melody and expression; and Connoisseurs wish that M. Rousseau may continue to enrich French and Latin Literature and Music by his Works," says "*Le Mercure*" for the month of June.¹ The following year, when scarcely a single performance took place without her, Marie Fel won a triumph with the *Laudate pueri* by Fiocco, an Italian composer whose motets she often interpreted "with that taste, lightness and precision which lend her such superiority in her art."

On February 2, 1758, just previous to her retirement from the Opéra, she appeared in the same concert at which her pupil, Sophie Arnould, "attracted the crowd as she does at the Opéra. The auditorium was full at half past four."

motet on which she lavished all that art can conceive of seductive and delightful charm." And further on: "Mlle. Fel has never imbued her singing with such grace; never has her audience manifested such gratification; one cannot speak of applause—it was a transport."

¹The "*Mémoires secrets*" for May 24th are less encomiastic, and aver that "despite the interpretation given by Mlle. Fel, it seems that the author of *Le Devin du Village* was not recognized herein. This production had no success at all."

In 1757 comes a new motet by Rousseau, *Ecce sedes hic tonantis*, composed by the philosopher-musician for Mme. d'Épinay. "The motet had such great success (says he himself) that it was afterwards produced at the Concerts Spirituels, where, in spite of mean cabals and a discreditable performance, it was twice received with equal applause." And even so, the cancatrice whose voice two years later was still "in its prime, and whose talent was still unabated," had borne a part in this "discreditable performance."

Constantly acclaimed and applauded by the Parisian public, she continued to sing at the Tuileries till 1769. During Lent in this last year she executed, with the singer Richter, the *Stabat Mater* by Pergolese, which until then had been assigned to two Italians, Dote and Albanese.

Next year—she had reached the age of fifty-eight—"Les Spectacles de Paris" no longer mention her; so we must conclude that she had abandoned the career of a virtuosa, at least in Paris, for in the succeeding winter we find her at the Académie de musique in Lyons; Soubry, Treasurer of France, and the then Director of this already declining enterprise, had conceived the idea of calling on the *récitante* of the Concerts Spirituels to restore a certain lustre to his performances. A bit of conversation taken down by M. Léon Vallas gives quite a humorous account of this appearance of Mlle. Fel before the dilettanti of Lyons, who were not in the least enthusiastic over it:

Something had to be done (relates an official of said Académie to a lady questioner); so we announced Mlle. Fel. This certainly was a well-worn makeshift for a pressing necessity, but they wrote us from Paris that age had not affected the mellifluousness of her throat, and that her voice was not a year over twenty-five. The sole stipulation on our part was that, in case she fell ill on arrival, the engagement should be cancelled. The syren appeared in our province, where the air so disagreed with her that she took an obstinate cold. Despite this indisposition, she had the courage to sing on concert-days, but it was well understood that she did so rather to meet the wishes of the public than as a matter of self-interest; for, although she had sung only two months, she disinterestedly accepted one-half the sum we had offered her for a six months' engagement, together with her traveling expenses, for which she was reimbursed. So you see, Madame, what success we had when we thought we were doing our best for the public and for ourselves.¹

We should find but slight interest in following our cancatrice into the "Concert chés la Reine." The programs of Versailles, of Fontainebleau, of Compiègne, of Marly, were identical, or nearly

¹Léon Vallas, "La Musique à Lyon," pp. 142-143.

so, with those in the Ville de Paris; in opera or concert, the court and the bourgeoisie of Paris applauded the same works, the sole advantage of the court being in priority. According to her own affirmations Marie Fel sang at court almost thirty years for a salary of 1000 livres, and obtained in 1763 an annual gratification of 1000 crowns on the budget of the Menus Plaisirs. On February 17, 1746, she created the principal feminine rôle in *Zélindor*, played by command at the Théâtre de la grande Écurie at Versailles, and on March the 3d and 10th that in *Zélisca*, by her comrade Jélyotte, composed for the nuptials of the Dauphin. At the same time she was a member of the troupe at the theatre of the Private Court Assemblies (*petits appartements*) inaugurated by Mme. de Pompadour.

She sang on January 4, 1749, in the opera of *Roland*, before the Dauphine; after that, on March 3, before the Queen, in *Bellérophon*; on April 20, in *Myrtil et Zélée*, by Royer; on January 14, 1751, in *Omphale*; on October 18, 1752, she created the rôle of Colette in *Le Devin du Village*; Jean-Jacques Rousseau himself carried her to Fontainebleau in a court equipage, together with Grimm (who, as we shall see directly, was madly in love with her) and Raynal. On March 16th of the following year, before the Dauphine and in the presence of the Queen, she sang *Armide*; on April 10th and 12th, *Zaïde*; and at Fontainebleau, in October, 1753, in *Phaëton*, *Daphnis et Églé*, pastorale in one act by Rameau, the book by Collé; in November, in *La Coquette trompée*, etc.

After this period, which was one of the most brilliant in the reign of Louis XV from a musical point of view, either because the Concert chés la Reine suffered an interruption, or for some other reason, the name of Marie Fel no longer appears frequently in the current statements of accounts. On the other hand, the documents preserved in the Archives, having reference to the King's Household, showed that she continued to draw annually something like 2000 livres, not inclusive of traveling expenses,¹ which formed an additional allowance. The last times that her appearance before the court is mentioned were February 9, 1763, at Marly, in the rôle of Alcimadure, and on November 28, 1764, in a divertissement performed before the royal princes and princesses at the Trianon, on the occasion of a collation given them there; she then assumed the rôle of a fairy in a divertissement in which Préville, Clairval and Richer also took part.

¹The National Archives contain in minutest detail everything bearing on these professional trips. From them we learn that for the nine concerts given before the Dauphine, at Compiègne, Mlle. Fel was paid 30 livres per rôle. In 1740, for two concerts given under similar circumstances, she received 100 l.

The above presents a succinct résumé of the artistic career, extending over thirty years, of one of the most illustrious cancan-trices of the Académie royale de musique in the reign of Louis XV. Before describing her private life, let us yield the floor to certain contemporaries who will tell us, less laconically than the editors of "Le Mercure," how they appreciated her artistry.

Daquin de Châteaulyon, son of the celebrated organist and harpsichordist, who published Part I of his "Siècle Littéraire de Louis XV" in 1752, expresses himself as follows with regard to Marie Fel at the period when she shone most refulgent:

The name of Marie Fel inspires a secret delight. It instantly evokes the vision of a marvelous Artiste. One makes the gratifying mental note of a voice of admirable precision and singular buoyancy. Better yet, one flies to the Opéra when she sings; one finds her ever new, ever brilliant; as M. the Abbé de la Porte, author of the lines that you will read directly, says: "It has a silvery timbre; judge of it by this one characteristic—she sings Italian and Provençal like Mlle. Faustine¹ when at her best."

Quelle voix légère et sonore!
Ah! que vous m'inspirez de feux,
De Fel; vos doux accens rendent plus tendre encor
L'amour qui brille dans vos yeux!

There is not one opera by the great Rameau that this Fairy does not embellish; and I opine from the satisfied mien with which she sings his Music that she gives it the preference over any other. One does not usually display one's fire and vivacity except for what gives one pleasure. The good taste shown by Mlle. Fel in this matter is one further reason for making her adored—I am not saying too much—by veritable connoisseurs. Therefore, incomparable Actress, receive the enthusiastic tribute paid you by M. Gresset: "Charmful voice, voice ever present in my thought, would that I might hear thee always; thy flashes of flame, thy cadences, thy tones of blended delight; their variety, their symmetry, their concert, all in thee is ravishing. With what fullness of joy dost thou fill my soul! Would one think to praise thee greatly by comparing thy strains to those of Philomela? Nay, do the inarticulate and unvarying tones of the tender Nightingale possess the expression, the soul and the life of thine? Always charming, always fascinating, every tone thou createst bears an emotion that penetrates the heart and captivates the senses."

After this panegyric of Mlle. Fel, and another of her associate, Mlle. Chevalier ("the two most famous actresses of the present time"), Daquin goes on to praise them equally as concert-singers:

I leave the Opéra (he says) to transport you to the Concert spirituel. You perceive, Sir, that our two actresses shine here no less than at that

¹Faustine Hasse.

grand Spectacle from which we have just departed. You find them the same, and it seems to you that they lend new charms to the sublime motets of a Lalande and a Mondonville.¹

Another contemporary, Collé, who is not invariably prodigal of praise for everything that concerns the theatre and music, passes, on the contrary, a severe judgment on the two singers, who, he remarks, are very far from being actresses, more particularly the latter, whose voice, light and perfect in its genre, is good only in ariettes.²—However severe on the actress (and we can readily believe him), Collé cannot refuse his admiration for the singer of whom La Borde, summarizing, in his "Essai sur la Musique," the opinions of contemporaries, writes (about 1780):

For twenty-five years her charming, pure, silvery voice has been the delight of the public, and might have been so for twenty years more had not her ill health and the delicacy of her lungs obliged her to retire from the stage about 1759. Mlle. Fel sang equally well in French and Italian, and among French singers she was one who sang Italian the best. Her voice is still as young as ever [she was over sixty-five when La Borde wrote this] and still amazes the small circle of friends to whom she has devoted the closing years of her life, and who cherish her personal qualities as warmly as they have always admired her varied talents.³

Everybody who mentions her incidentally makes the name of Fel the synonym for a perfect singer, at least according to the taste of that time, which demanded of the artist a veritable interpretation of, well-nigh a collaboration with, the composer. The voice was then dealt with like the harpsichord; harpsichordists and singers alike had to interpret the numerous signs and "ornaments" indicated by the composer, and that according to his personal "taste," which might be very eccentric. The taste of Mlle. Fel was evidently in agreement with that of her period, for, with regard to her singing, no criticism was raised against her artistry. It is true that, from the dramatic standpoint, she was inferior to certain of her associates at the Opéra. The two bits of verse given below express in rime these unanimous opinions.

LETTER TO Mlle. FEL, ACCOMPANYING THE WORDS TO *LE RETOUR DU PRINTEMPS*⁴

Toi, dont la voix tendre et touchante
Semble être l'organe des Dieux,
Toi, dont les talens précieux

¹Daquin, "Siècle Littéraire," etc., pp. 176-177.

²Collé, "Journal et Mémoires," édit. Bonhomme, I, p. 52 (February, 1749).

³De La Borde, "Essai sur la Musique ancienne et moderne," III, p. 510.

⁴A cantata by Philidor, bearing this title, is extant. According to Grégoir ("Gloires de l'Opéra," II, p. 178) there was a rehearsal of *Le Retour du Printemps* (The Return of Spring) at the Italiens in 1755 "in which Mlle. Fel distinguished herself." Now, these lines were written in 1772.

Te rendent plus intéressante
 Que la Divinité charmante
 Qui jadis brillait dans les cieux:
 Aimable Fel, embellis un ouvrage
 Qui n'a, pour plaire et pour être admiré,
 Que ces talents dont l'unique assemblage
 Enlève et force le suffrage
 Du censeur de plus éclairé.

(Dec. 28, 1772.)

De la tendre Philomèle
 Fel est le parfait modèle.
 Ses accens mélodieux
 Sauroient enchanter les Dieux.
 Musique tendre et légère,
 Air badin, air sérieux,
 Air barbare, air gracieux,
 Dans son gosier tout veut plaire.

Prose writers and versifiers—we dare not say poets—were thus agreed in singing the praises of the interpreter of Mouret, Mondonville and Rameau; from such concordant testimony it would appear that her histrionic ability was considerably inferior to her vocal talent, which was well suited for interpreting the music of that period—a music which, set free from the plain-chant of Lully and under Italian influence since the appearance of the Buffons in 1752, was about to bring into being that *galant* and peculiarly French style that dominated our music until the arrival of Gluck.

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After this rapid sketch of the artistic career of the cancatrice, information gathered from the most diverse sources will now reveal to us, so far as may be, her private life, her friendships, and her adventures—these latter rather infrequent, withal.

"The Budget of the Actresses of the Opéra, with their ages and dwellings and the names of their *Entreteneurs*, for the month of September, 1752," compiled by Inspector of Police Meunier, begins with this statement: "*Actrices récitantes* [leading ladies]. Mlle. De Fel, age 35; rue St-Thomas du Louvre next the hotel Longueville. Lives with M. Cahuzac."—And in the three thick volumes of reports compiled by this same Inspector (which are now in the Library of the Arsenal, taken over from the Archives of the Bastille);—among the accumulations of these scandalous tales which, it is said, so greatly delighted Louis XV, the Well-Beloved;—among these anecdotes wherein the most brightly em-

blazoned names of all Europe jostle those of the most famous courtisans and the vilest prostitutes, one single page concerns "la D^{lle} Fel, actrice récitante à l'Opéra." Here it is:

La D^{lle} Fel, actrice récitante à l'Opéra, lives rue St-Thomas du Louvre next the hotel Longueville. She is petite, dark, 33 or 34 years old,¹ dark-complexioned, ugly on the whole, although she does not think so herself; has a lovely voice. It is asserted that she is going to marry M. Cahuzac; they live next door to each other and keep house together. M. Cahuzac wrote the texts for the operas *Naïs* and *Zoroastre*. He usually works for M. Rameau.² He is a little brown man, wears a per-ruque, and is about the same age as la D^{lle} Fel.

She is a native of Bordeaux, has sung at the concerts in Amiens.³

One can judge from the pastel by La Tour (possibly idealized) whether Inspector Meunier was a good judge of the beauty of this *récitante* of the Opéra; in any event, her likeness surprises and discords among the doll-faces *à la mode* immortalized by the pastel-ist; and the same may be said of her mundane existence, which was, taken all in all, far less stormy than that of many another *fille d'opéra*. For these, in the police reports, frequently require veritable volumes of documents; Marie Fel has only this solitary mention. Hence we find some justification for the disdainful exclamation "Penelope!" once thrown in her face by her pupil, the witty and pitiless Sophie Arnould. And now let us quote, with all reserve, the following passage from the "Mémoires" of Casanova, who paid his first visit to Paris in 1750:

Coming out of the Tuileries (so the celebrated Venetian relates), Patu took me to visit a famous actress of the Opéra, named Mlle. Le Fel [*sic*], a great favorite with all Paris and a member of the Académie royale de musique. With her were three charming children of tender years, who frolicked around the house. "I adore them," she said.—"Such lovely children deserve it," I responded, "though each differs in expression from the others."—"I believe you! The oldest is the Duke d'An-
necy's; the second is the Count of Egmont's; and the youngest is the child of Maisonrouge, who recently married *la Romainville*."—"Ah! I beg you to excuse me; I had supposed that you were the mother of all three."—"And you were not mistaken, for I am."—So saying, she glanced at Patu, and joined him in a burst of laughter which, without causing me to blush, apprized me of my inadvertence.

¹In reality, 36 or 37, as this entry was made about 1750-51.

²Louis de Cahuzac was born near the beginning of the century of a noble family of Montauban. He had been private secretary to the Count of Clermont, and had brought out several pieces at the Théâtre Français and, with Rameau, at the Opéra, *Les Fêtes de Polymnie*, *Les Fêtes de l'Hymen*, and *Zaïs*; furthermore, *Naïs* and *Zoroastre* (1749), and likewise a history of "La Danse ancienne et moderne."

³Biblioth. de l'Arsenal, Arch. de la Bastille, MS. 10237, pp. 239-240.

Being new-come, I had not yet grown accustomed to seeing women trench on the privilege of men. However, Mlle. Le Fel was not indelicate, her manners were those of good society; but she was what is termed superior to prejudice. Had I been more familiar with the morals of the time, I should have known that such matters were the regular thing, and that the *grands seigneurs* who thus broadcast their progeny left their children in the hands of the mothers, to whom they paid liberal allowances. Consequently, the more these ladies accumulated, the greater the affluence they enjoyed.¹

Another author of scandalous chronicles, Chevrier, whose "Le Colporteur" appeared near the beginning of 1762, assumed the rôle of an echo of the malevolent gossip concerning the cancatrice. The following bit of dialogue is a specimen by which one may judge of the tone of this "moral narrative":

"You may be right, to a certain extent," said the Marquise, "but still you will admit that the fate of these Girls, of whom you fancy we are jealous, is to die in ignominy."—"I beg your pardon, Madam, if I interrupt," replied the Colporteur, "but I share your opinion. Look at la Cartout, who retired as the *doyenne* of the Opéra choruses; . . . look at la Fel, who during our own time has been the glory of the Académie Royale de Musique, and whose enchanting notes long disputed the palm with the melody of the nightingale. Time was, when she imagined that she honored a Sovereign by receiving him in her embrace; she made a madman of the fond Cahuzac,² who just died in his cell at Charenton, & to-day this baggage is reduced to sue for a glance, or to pervert her taste."³

How much of these tales ought one to believe? To what "sovereign" does Chevrier allude? It would seem difficult to find out. Cahuzac's story, however, is well known. Grimm, who was his rival for the heart of the cancatrice, thus announces his death, which occurred on June 22, 1759, in the insane asylum at Charenton:

We have just lost another poet. Louis Cahuzac has died violently insane. He was a man of slight talents and vast pretensions. He wrote several operas, which owed their success in France to the music by Rameau.⁴

¹G. Capon, "Casanova à Paris," pp. 27-28.

²"A lyric poet enjoying an income of 8000 livres, who died of grief because he could not marry la Fel." (Note by Chevrier.)

³Chevrier, "Le Colporteur. Histoire morale et critique." A Londres, chez Jean Nourse. L'an de la Vérité. Pp. 96-97.

⁴Masson de Maisonrouge, whose second marriage stirred up a scandal at the time, had lost his wife in December, 1751. He "had lived apart from her for a long time, says a contemporary, and was seeking a legal separation. He had always kept mistresses, the last being mademoiselle Rotisset de Romainville, an actress at the Opéra, who is neither too young nor too pretty, and who had always led a life of public libertinage." At the age of fifty-one Maisonrouge married her on February 3, 1752, this being later than the time of Casanova's visit. La Rotisset died three months afterward, in May.—There were two counts d'Egmont-Pignatelli: Guy-Félix (1720-1753) and Casimir, who was *maire* (mayor) from 1753 to 1756.

As for Grimm himself, Jean-Jacques, on the occasion of the first representation of his *Devin* at Fontainebleau, tells how he (Rameau) "lost sight of him altogether":

Grimm (he writes in Book VIII of the "Confessions"), after having known mademoiselle Fel for some time as a good friend, all at once took a notion to fall in love with her head over heels, and sought to supplant Cahuzac. The fair one, piquing herself on her constancy, dismissed this new pretender. He took the matter tragically, and persuaded himself that it would be his death. All at once he was stricken by perhaps the strangest malady that was ever heard of. He passed his days and nights in a continuous lethargy, his eyes wide open, his pulse beating regularly, but without speaking, eating, or moving, seeming sometimes to hear, but never answering even by a sign; and all this without pain or agitation, without fever, but lying still as though he were dead. Abbé Raynal and I took turns in attending him—the Abbé, being more robust and in better health, during the night, and I in daytime, never leaving him alone, for the one did not go away until the other had arrived. Count de Frièse, in alarm, brought Senac to him, who, after examining him thoroughly, said there was nothing wrong, and prescribed nothing for him. My fear for my friend made me scrutinize the physician's face closely, and I saw him smile on going out. Still, the patient remained motionless for several days, without taking any bouillon or anything else excepting some preserved cherries which I placed on his tongue from time to time and which he swallowed readily. One fine morning he got up, dressed himself, and resumed his habitual course of life, without ever speaking of this singular lethargy either to me or, so far as I know, to Abbé Raynal or anybody else, nor did he ever mention the care we had taken of him during his illness.

This happening did not fail to make a stir, and it would really have made an amazingly good story if a man had died of despair because of the cruelty of a *fille d'Opéra*. This fond passion made Grimm the man of the hour; soon he was looked upon as a prodigy of love, of friendship, of attachment of every sort. This consensus of opinion made him sought for and fêted in the highest circles, thus removing him from my sphere—in fact, I had never been anything for him but a stop-gap.

As fatuous as he was vain (writes Jean-Jacques further on), with his great melancholy eyes and gangling figure, he had pretensions to the favor of the ladies, and, after his farce with mademoiselle Fel, he passed among quite a number of them for a man of lofty sentiment.¹

Thus ended, according to Rousseau, this tale of feigned affliction ("histoire de carpe pâmée"), and the unhappy Cahuzac was quite at liberty to go mad in good earnest because of his failure to marry Marie Fel.

Mme. d'Épinay, in her *Mémoires*, recalls in this connection her conversations with Duclos touching the passion of the German Baron for the cancatrice:

¹J.-J. Rousseau, "Confessions," édit. Van Bever, 1914, Vol. II, pp. 238-9, 399, 401.

Whether he is or is not in love with you, I can tell you that in his heart he nourishes a passion for our little Fel, who would none of it—you will have only the leavings. She dismissed him from her rooms, and that is the explanation of his last absence, of this pretended favor that he did Baron von Holbach by traveling with him—all because he lost his head over it. As for that, perhaps you will cure him, for he still loves her.

And this same Duclos later returns to the same subject, which possessed a singular interest for Mme. d'Épinay, a trifle vexed at finding a rival in a *filles d'Opéra*:

Little Fel (so he assures her) discarded Grimm because he had fomented an infernal intrigue to drive away from her those persons who had begun to see through him. Since then she cannot bear to hear his name mentioned; while he, meanly, shamefully, after having abused the ascendancy he had gained over her by the display of his lofty principles, and after making her dismiss all her servants—he has had the effrontery to complain of the hard-heartedness that this girl has shown him since the rupture. Scoundrels are clumsy; at present, while playing the game as he plays it, he acts like the devil of a fellow, but always with the soft pedal, as he needs must to approach la Fel again and merely be admitted to her presence. Is it clear?

Mme. d'Épinay sought to get at the truth: "I simply had to talk the matter over with Grimm," she remarks a few pages further on, and thus reports their conversation:

I told him all that I had learned from the lips of Duclos.—"Madame, I have told you the truth with regard to mademoiselle Fel; I esteemed her, I loved her, I adored her, because I thought myself loved and esteemed by her. She has treated me with such marked indifference, with such a lack of respect and with so revolting a contempt, that no consideration whatever could persuade me to see her again."¹

Which was right, Duclos or Grimm? It seems likely that it was the former. However that may be, the baron had been dismissed, and the whole comedy of the discarded lover probably had no other aim than to put him in an interesting light.

It is near the time of Cahuzac's disappearance that we may, presumably, place the beginnings of the liaison between Marie Fel and Quentin de la Tour—who was likewise to end as a madman—a liaison which came to an end with the departure from Paris of the pastellist and painter of the king. The famous portrait of the actress, of which we now possess only the preliminary sketches, made possibly some years previously, was displayed in the Salon du Louvre in 1757. So Mlle. Fel was about forty when La Tour did the work. In Paris at first, and later when the painter had

¹Mme. d'Épinay, "Mémoires," Vol. II, pp. 32, 41-2, 56.

returned to his native town, four years before his death, she never ceased to exhibit the warmest affection for him.

Living, after her retirement from the Opéra, "in the society of friends by whom she was esteemed and cherished,"¹ she had left the Rue Saint-Thomas du Louvre to take up her abode in the rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, before settling on the heights of Chailot, where she was to die.

Associating with artists and *littérateurs*, Marie Fel visited Voltaire in several successive summers at the Délices and at Ferney, whereof we find proof in the four extracts below from the philosopher's correspondence. The first is taken from a letter to one of his oldest friends, Thiériot, the second from a letter to Count d'Argental, and the two following are from letters addressed to Marie Fel herself:

Aux Délices, June 15 [1759].

My old friend Marie Fel is here with me, together with her brother,² who is older than you, who sustained the journey bravely, and who still sings. If you would like to come to see us without singing, you will not be so well received as at the Montmorencys," but . . .

Oves ad flumina pascit Adonis

Aux Délices, June 15 [1759].

Though Mlle. Fel may do her best to allay our sufferings with her sweet throat, my head begins to swim.

On her return to Paris Voltaire wrote her this genial epistle:

Aux Délices, June 15 [1759].

Most amiable Nightingale, uncle and niece, or rather niece and uncle, were in need of recalling you to mind. People who have only ears, admire you; those who, besides ears, are possessed of feeling, love you. We flatter ourselves that we have both. And you must know that, despite all your modesty, you are as seductive when you talk as when you sing. Society is the first among concerts, and you take the leading rôle in it. We are well aware that we shall no longer enjoy your company, whose value we have appreciated to the full; the dwellers by the shores of our lake are not destined to be as happy as those on the banks of the Seine. Here is what our little corner of the Alps says of you:

Du rossignol pourquoi porter le nom?
Il est bien vrai qu'ils ont été mes maitres,
Mais tous les ans dans la belle saison
L'amour les guide en mes réduits champêtres.

¹"Annales dramatiques," Vol. IV, p. 74 (1809-1811).

²Antoine Fel died at Paris, June 27, 1771, at the age of 75, so he was born in 1696, the same year as Voltaire's friend. A baritone at the opera, from which he retired in 1753 or 1754, he received a modest pension of 300 l. annually. He also sang with the baritones at the Concerts Spirituels. He published twelve short cantatas, the last ten of which appeared in 1748.

Elle n'a pas tant de fidélité;
 Elle nous fuit, peut-être nous oublie.
 C'est le phénix à jamais regretté,
 On ne le voit qu'une fois dans la vie.

Thus it is that they deal with you, mademoiselle, and should you return, you will gain nothing by it—you will be treated like a phoenix that has been seen twice. As for myself, however I may long to come and pay you homage, there is no likelihood that I shall go to Paris. There the rôle of man of letters is too ridiculous, and that of philosopher too dangerous. I want to finish my château, and do not care to build any more in Spain.

Really, you are extremely kind to speak to me about M. de La Borde. I know him for a man of genuine merit, and necessary to the State. Gentlemen of this species are very rare.¹

Adieu, mademoiselle, receive without ceremony the assurances of the attachment of both uncle and niece. Our compliments to M. your brother.

And two years later, after another stay at Voltaire's, not Aux Délices but in his château at Ferney, a final letter shows in what esteem the editor of the "Commentaires sur Corneille" held the former actress at the Opéra:

Au château de Ferney, near Geneva, July 29 [1761].

I feel, mademoiselle, that I owe you thanks, every year, for being so kind as to visit me in my humble retreat; but it is necessary for me to thank you for another kind of pleasure that you have given me, of which you are perhaps not aware.

You told me (in) Aux Délices that there was in Paris a man of great intelligence and generosity, whose chief pleasure was to oblige, this man being M. de La Borde. This I remembered when the matter of printing an edition of Corneille with notes came up, and of making it a magnificent edition, for the benefit of the unfortunate family of that great man. I very indiscreetly repeated to M. de La Borde, word for word, all that you had told me about him. I assure you that he has not belied your eulogies; he is promoting the enterprise with all the zeal of a loyal citizen, and he has written me a letter which proves him possessed of as much acumen as nobility of soul. I am so impressed with all he has condescended to do that I cannot help telling you of it.

You, mademoiselle, whose talents are of so superior an order, will feel far more deeply than others how fine a thing it will be for our nation to safeguard the talents of our great Corneille one hundred years after his death, and you should feel flattered that it was your friend, M. de La Borde, who took the first steps to that end. So you will pardon my enthusiasm, and rest assured that we shall always bear you in warmest regard at the foot of the Alps, madame Denis and I.

¹De La Borde, the celebrated banker of the court, and a great amateur of music. He obtained "more than one hundred subscriptions" to the edition of Corneille. (Letter from Voltaire to Abbé d'Olivet, August 20, 1761.)

Receive, with your usual kindness, the respectful devotion of the old

Voltaire.¹

Having retired in 1759 from the Opéra with a pension of 1500 livres, and from the "Musique de la chambre du roi" in 1763 with an annual "gratification" of 1000 écus "without rebate" on the budget of the "Menus plaisirs," Marie Fel enjoyed, besides, beginning with March 27, 1778, an allowance of 2000 livres which had been set apart for her as a charge on the ordinary funds of the same "Menus," "without rebate, as a retiring pension, she having been musician in ordinary to the Chambre du Roi." In an order for a pension of 5000 livres, granted by the king on May 1, 1780, these different items are enumerated.

Directly after the bestowal of her allowance of 2000 livres, in 1778, she acquired the usufruct for life of a house situated in the village of Chaillot, then outside of Paris. It was a two-story house with a mansard roof, in a terraced garden.² On the 4th of May she purchased this property of State Councillor Augustin Henry Cochin for the sum of 9325 livres, which she paid over ten days thereafter in the presence of notaries Balurgay and Debérain.³

Quentin de La Tour also came to live in Chaillot in the month of April (or May), 1784, in the neighborhood if not in the very house of his "Céleste." But he stayed there only a very short time; the following 20th of June his brother was obliged to transport him to Saint-Quentin in a condition bordering on insanity.

A charming note from Marie Fel to La Tour recalls this brief sojourn of the painter in the village of Chaillot:

My dearest neighbor (she writes), I have immersed myself up to the neck in the details of our *dinné*, and in order that you may know what it costs nowadays to give a repast, I send you the list, which does not in the least resemble the menu of a benefit—you will find neither wine nor liqueur, unless we are to share in the expense. You will know positively where your guests can go, for I have been most scrupulously careful to see everything and find out everything. I wish you good-day, and kiss you with all my heart.

Chaillot, Thursday.

I took some manna this morning to get rid of my obstructions, and am feeling better.

This is the only letter extant addressed by Mlle. Fel to her friend. But as soon as he was taken back to Saint-Quentin, where

¹"Œuvres de Voltaire," édition Beuchot, XL, 120, 122, XLI, 377.

²Hard by the church of Saint-Pierre, near the present No. 30.

³According to unpublished documents preserved in the Departmental Archives of the Seine.

his brother, the chevalier (or the "gendarme," for he had formerly been an officer in the gendarmerie), watched over his sadly compromised health, the actress was continually asking after him, and the few letters discovered and published by M. Desmaze in the "Reliquaire" of La Tour¹ bear witness to her persistent solicitude. The first letter, dated approximately "1780-81" by M. Desmaze, ought, beyond the shadow of a doubt, to follow that of January 5, 1785, and was written after a trip taken to Paris by the chevalier; two others are of 1785 and 1788, the latter six weeks previous to the death of Quentin; the last—dated 1789 and addressed to M. Cambronne-Huet, commercial judge at Saint-Quentin, who was a friend of La Tour until his death—should probably bear a date two years earlier, for it is still concerned with the painter's health, and he died February 17, 1788. Finally, a short note, addressed at an unknown date to the chevalier, completes this reliquary of these lovers of long ago.

La Tour, having departed from the galleries of the Louvre about 1780, or in 1784, according to one of his biographers, Abel Patoux, is said to have retired to Auteuil. We should evidently read "Chaillot," as is confirmed by his will, in which, on February 9, 1784, he bequeathed

To Mlle. Fel, all the furniture, mirrors, seats, pictures, etc., which are in my apartment, excepting the large telescope; said effects to pass, after her decease, to my cousin Dorizon, or to his children if he is no longer living.

A codicil, dated February 20th, confirms this legacy in these terms:

To Mlle. Fel, all that I possess at Chaillot (excepting my large telescope, which is to be disposed of by lottery), the pianoforte, the mirrors, the furniture and that of the servants. All to revert after her decease to cousin Dorizon or his family, as also the household silver to be found there, consisting at present of four small dishes and a dozen spoons and forks, all of silver.²

The legatee alludes to this will in the first letter that she addresses to the chevalier, in which she furthermore expresses an intention of returning to Paris in case the *appartement* of La Tour, which the chevalier offers her (in the Galeries du Louvre?), suits her, her apartment in the Boulevard des Filles-de-Calvaire being too gloomy for her taste. The letter follows:

¹Ch. Desmaze, "Le Reliquaire de Maurice Quentin de La Tour, peintre du Roi Louis XV." 1874, pp. 46-47.

²Tournaux, "La Tour chez ses notaires" ("Gazette des Beaux-Arts," 1885, Vol. 32, pp. 82-83).

Paris, January 5, 1785.

I have received, Monsieur le chevalier, the list you enclosed of the furniture which your kindness offers for my use and enjoyment during my lifetime. I am deeply moved by the new proposals you make me, but beg you to believe that I have never expected any token of recognition on your part, having merely obeyed the dictates of conscience, my usual guide in all the actions of my life.

As to the apartment that I occupy in Paris, it suits me on account of its nearness to my friends, but is so gloomy that, if the portion that I do not know is less so, I might possibly rent the whole of it in order to escape from the bogs of Chaillot during the winter. When you are again in Paris, I shall make up my mind. M. Dorizon will have told you that, according to the report from M. Pasquier concerning the possible danger and damage by smoke to the pastels of M. de La Tour, you should come immediately and have the fissures in the wall closed; so I expect that this accident will decide you to make the little trip possible.¹

Receive the assurances of my sincerest good wishes for you now and ever, and of the devotion with which I am, for life,

Monsieur le chevalier,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

FEL.

All my friends desire to send you their regards and respects; please convey mine to the friends where you are.²

The chevalier de La Tour probably came to Paris some time during that year; after his return to Saint-Quentin he received from his fair correspondent this second (undated) letter:

I was very glad, Monsieur le chevalier, to learn that you have traversed the forests without mishap, and also of the way our poor neighbor received you—there was nothing mad about that. I am even tempted to believe that our absence has disposed him to reflection; that he has had time to digest, and that, seeing himself dependent upon us, he has felt that it would be for his best interests to conciliate us. As for the slender diet which he chooses to observe, do not constrain him—I know his habits in that particular. When he used to feel that his stomach was overworked, he would sometimes go two or three days without eating.

Adieu, Monsieur le chevalier; I have given your compliments to everybody, pray convey mine to M. l'abbé Duliège³ and to those friends

¹Upon breaking the seals on Marie Fel's property (24 Pluviôse, year II) her niece, Marie-Antoinette-Françoise, testifies "that she had invited to attend the ceremony citizen Jean François Dela Tour, a French citizen domiciled at Saint-Quentin, who had affairs to arrange with her on account of articles of furniture belonging to him and placed in the said premises, the said La Tour being represented by citizen Jean Robert Dorison, a citizen of Paris. . . . with procuration from the said La Tour, etc." (Archives de la Seine, Justices de paix.)—The same protocol mentions (according to statements by the veuve Duchesne) that the executor of Marie Fel "is a certain Paquet, painter of miniatures at the Galleries du Louvre and at present under arrest at La Force; furthermore, that relations of the Defunct are living in le Beard, and that she had a brother at Bicêtre." (*Ibid.*)

²Ch. Desmaze, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

³Abbé Duliège was the executor of the chevalier's will.

who keep me in kind remembrance, and receive without ceremony the assurance of my entire devotion.

FEL.¹

The following letter is some six months later in date:

I am very sensible, Monsieur le chevalier, of your kind wishes with regard to myself and of their sincerity, which, in consideration of my knowledge of your sincerity and your character, I cannot doubt; I also flatter myself that you are persuaded that no one has a livelier desire than I that you should be happy and quiet in mind.

I am delighted that your poor brother continues in health; one must not be surprised if, at his age, his strength should diminish; all things have their accepted time, one must always consider that. I think, though, that it would be well to persuade him that Céleste finds it amiss that he drinks his urine, and that he abstains from eating for two days. As for the benedictions, I think them as indifferent as those of the Pope, so you may let them proceed. What you tell me about M. Ribert, the inspector of manufactures, proves to me that my answer crossed your letter. He has written me the nicest letter one can imagine, and I had the honor to answer him in the most detailed fashion that I sang at the Amiens concerts at the time when M. Chauvelin was intendant there;² thereupon, Monsieur le chevalier, he has learned discretion, and I am very glad of it; give him my compliments, and I beg you all to drink to my health. You are aware of my sentiments; having no desire to change them I am without ceremony

Monsieur le chevalier

Your most humble and obedient servant

Paris, Jan. 5, 1788.

FEL.³

Note by Mlle. Fel Concerning La Tour
(Undated)

A certain monsieur d'Argenville, councillor at the Châtelet, I believe, who held your brother in high esteem, has for a long time occupied himself with collecting anecdotes in order to gratify his desire of writing a life of his friend, in the which to emblazon his virtues and his great talents. I have racked my brain, Monsieur le chevalier, to find him some, according to what he himself has related to me; such as his arrival in Paris, his dissipated life, the portrait of Mme. Boulogne, the remark of old Boulogne, the lady's father-in-law, [that] this great painter desired to make the young man's acquaintance; he was presented; he drags him by his coat-collar in front of the portrait, saying to him: "Look, poor wretch, and see if you are worthy of the gift nature has bestowed on you; go make a copy, if you would become a man."

I also told him (as he told me) about the portraits of M. and Mme. de l'Arenière (Grimod de La Reynière), which he did not care to do for less than two thousand crowns [écus], telling them that rich people ought to pay for poor folk. He also told me that, while painting the royal

¹Ch. Desmaze, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-51.

²From 1731 to 1751.

³De-maze, *loc. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

children at Meudon, he had had the courage to say to M. le dauphin that his children were ill brought up. He also told me how, while painting Mme. de Pompadour, the king came back very sad after the affair at Rossbach, and he said to him that he should not take it so to heart, that he would fall ill, and, anyhow, "after us the deluge."

His words went uncontradicted; after the king had gone La Tour said to the lady that the words had made him feel badly—that it would be better that the king fell ill than that his heart should be hardened.—These, Monsieur le chevalier, are the anecdotes wherewith my head could furnish M. d'Argenville; should you have any that I do not know, you would do me a favor to send them to me so that I can forward them to him.

Adieu, Monsieur le chevalier, receive without ceremony the assurance of the regard which you know I bear you and which will last as long as I.

FEL.¹

The letter addressed "to M. Cambronne-Huet, Juge-Consul at Saint-Quentin, in Picardie," which M. Desmaze dated 1789, looks to us as if it had been written at least two years earlier, before the death of La Tour, for news concerning whom Mlle. Fel inquires:

Chaillot, July 8, 1780.

The precautions, Monsieur, which you cause to be observed with regard to M. le chevalier de La Tour, are wholly in accord with my own way of thinking. In the crisis through which he is passing one must not follow the conventions too blindly, and, frankly, it is time for the poor chevalier to find repose.

I shall receive Mulér with pleasure as my servant, all the more as I had decided to dismiss mine, who, as I had expected, has felt that he was somebody since he had the honor to shift the blame onto a fool. I am going to stop the activities of our friends, who were endeavoring to find such a person as I need for his happiness and my own. If Mulér serves me devotedly, if he does not fail in his duties, he will never desire to leave me, for with me he will find fair dealing, good treatment, a well-ordered household, and much ease and quiet. I pay one hundred écus and supply his livery and free laundry, with New Year's gift in proportion to his merit.

If he is satisfied with these conditions, M. le Chevalier will send him to me with a few lines of news about M. de La Tour; I shall have a talk with him in which I shall decide when he is to come to me; while Mulér is taking his ease I shall get rid of my incubus.

I beg you, monsieur, to continue your friendly offices, in the rôle of a truthful friend! Those who know you best have recognized these attributes of your heart. I have the honor to remain, with the greatest respect,

Monsieur,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

FEL.

¹Desmaze, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.

Pray convey my best regards to M. le chevalier and, although I have not the honor of Mme. Cambronne's acquaintance, I take the liberty of greeting her together with all your family.¹

La Tour died February 17, 1788. Then came the Revolution! A decree of 1790 abolished all the pensions of the *ancien régime*. Consequently, Mlle. Fel lost the greater part of her income. Attended by her "sole and only heir," Marie-Antoinette-Françoise,² late chorus-singer of the Concert Spirituel at the Tuileries, she ended her long life in the quietude of the village of Chaillot, at the age of eighty-one, on February 2, 1794 (14 Pluviôse, an II de la République), a date fixed by legal documents. The house occupied by the subject of our sketch, very close to the church, had been owned since 1791 by notary Chaudet, who died on the scaffold in this same month of Pluviôse, year II.³ And it is the legal investigation of her estate, and the protocol after the breaking of the seals,⁴ that inform us how, in the midst of the Revolution, in the solitude of the suburb of Chaillot, the Nightingale passed away who had enchanted several generations of

¹Desmaze, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

²It was she, and not her aunt (as has often been related), who was involved in a singular theatre adventure. With Mlle. Charmoy, of the Opéra, she was a second for the danseuse Théodore in the duel which the latter fought with Beaumesnil, so it is said, towards 1780. Mlle. Guimard was, with Mme. Gélén, a second of this latter. (M. Campardon notes that as Mme. Gélén died in 1777, the duel must at latest have taken place in that year, or else with another second.) The meeting-place agreed on was the Porte Maillot. "The weapons chosen for the duel were pistols. At the moment when it was to begin, Rey, assistant *maître de musique* at the Opéra, happened to be passing and tried to compose the quarrel. Failing to do so, he handed the combatants the two pistols, of which he had taken possession, and which, during his exhortations, he had laid down on the wet grass. The pistols fizzled, and Mlles. Beaumesnil and Théodore fell into each others' arms." (Campardon, "L'Académie roy. de mus. au XVIII^e siècle, I, pp. 54-55) Adélaïde de Villars, alias Beaumesnil, long survived this theatre-duel, for she died in 1813.

³Jean-Baptiste Chaudot, notary since 1781, was one of the eight Parisian notaries who were guillotined (February 16, 1794). He had acquired the property at Chaillot belonging to Cochin after the separation of the latter from his wife, Elizabeth Germain, who inherited it from her father, Jean-Louis Petit, a surgeon, and a member of the Académie des Sciences. (Lefeuve, "Les Rues de Paris," III, p. 471.)

⁴This document, an extremely minute inventory of all the furniture and various objects found in the house at Chaillot, indicates that the entire liquid assets left by Mlle. Fel amounted to thirty livres in assignats. (On February 2, 1794, 100 livres in assignats had a value of 19 in coin.) La Tour's cousin, citizen Dorison, "citoyen de Paris," laid claim to what was left by will to the chevalier. As "objects of art" the inventory named two pictures "representing family portraits, battle scenes, and other subjects," six prints under glass, "which are *ma Dame bienfaisant*, my beloved mother, The Cake, The Village Bride, La Tour, La Condomine, and Ceruti." In the drawing-room in the second story, hung with "papier Tontine," a bust of Voltaire, in unglazed Sèvres porcelain, was enthroned over the fireplace; on the walls were three prints under glass in gilded wood frames. Finally, in the third story, in the hall, two prints, "and a pastel under glass," the sole work by La Tour that remained in the house at Chaillot. Can it have been the portrait of Mlle. Fel exhibited in the Salon of 1757, of which only the "sketches" are still extant?

dilettanti during the most brilliant and the most disastrous years of the olden monarchy.

(Translated by Theodore Baker)

THE MUSICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF AMERICA

By HAROLD D. PHILLIPS

IT is essential in the discussion of so comprehensive a subject as is suggested by the title of this article, that a clear distinction be drawn at the outset between the extent of America's musical appreciation and the particular character of this appreciation as compared with that of other countries. Now there can be no question that the general vitality of the nation's musical interest is not only strikingly in evidence just now, but that it threatens to assume almost epidemic proportions in the future. The point for discussion then is not the extent of this country's appreciation of music but the special nature of the appeal of this form of art to the individual American.

It is a truism, of course, to say that of all the arts music is the most purely emotional in its essence and that for this reason its message is fundamentally the same, even when one realizes the immense chasm to be bridged between the cultured European's appreciation of a string quartet and the savage's tingle of the blood at the clashing of cymbals.

Would, however, the impression of an unbiassed visitor to this country be that the element of emotion is truly the impelling force in the nature of music's appeal to the typical American, or that the vast musical exploitations here have as their basis a subconscious desire in the heart of the people for emotional expression? There is, of course, a certain percentage with whom "feeling" in music is the paramount issue, and on the other hand quite a number of Europeans who are appealed to either by the intellectual or technical side of the art. The point at issue, however, and that which I propose to discuss, is the generally prevailing national tendency of the musical appreciation here as compared with that of other countries.

Now, in older civilizations, expression of various phases of feeling originally found utterance in single-part melodies quite indefinite both as to pitch and rhythm. Under the auspices of the Roman Church, certain of such melodies, Hebrew in origin, gradually took definite form and substance, and ultimately became the corner-stone of the first great era in musical evolution. Simultaneously, Western Europe was swept by a wave of enthusiasm

for the folk-song expressive of the racial sentiment of its various nationalities. From such beginnings was ultimately evolved the vast complex musical system of the present day. This preamble is merely to show that in Europe music developed subconsciously as an expression of the emotional life of the various nations, but that full freedom of emotional expression was not attained till comparatively recently, owing to the crude nature of the musical apparatus of earlier ages.

Altogether different, and obviously so from the nature of the case, has been the history of America's musical development, and my fundamental assumption that there is a radical divergency between the musical psychology of American and that of other nationalities is easily accounted for by the essentially *external* nature of this country's musical inspiration. It may be argued, of course, that the pioneers of civilization here had considerable stock to draw upon from the lands they left behind them, and so could have founded a musical tradition for future generations. Pioneers, however, are not as a rule musically inclined. Imagine for instance the quantity and quality of the musical talent aboard the Mayflower!

Then again the mixture of races with the unmusical Anglo-Saxon predominant, would naturally militate against a uniform type of music representative of the country as a whole. The fact then is that America's music is not its own, and has not grown up with the emotional life of the nation from generation to generation as in other civilized countries. Rather is it a summary of imported musical feeling from various parts of Europe, never wholly assimilated, and this condition affects not only the composer but the music-loving community of America as a whole, and so is largely responsible, I believe, for the comparatively unemotional attitude of a by no means unemotional people towards the art. I lay stress on the word "comparatively" used in the last sentence, for wholly to deny to this country the sense of "feeling" through the medium of music would be, of course, ridiculous. All that is contended is that this element is at once far less universal and intense than in Europe.

On the other hand, the typical music-lover of this country is certainly highly sensitive to colour and rhythm, to musical excitements and climaxes, above all to the sense of life and movement in music, and these elements do after all represent emotional conditions of a certain kind. Not truly, however, is this identical even with the elemental stirring of the blood which I have referred to as constituting the essence of music's appeal to primitive races,

for in this country the type of musical sensation is often the reflection of a nervous excitement artificially produced by the high pressure and speed of life all around, and has its source rather in the nerves than in the heart of the people. We come, however, to the fountainhead of the whole question at issue when we stop to consider how great a value and significance all that is embodied in the word *sentiment* has in the musical being of the nation; still more when we reflect as to the degree of responsiveness in the public to music symbolic of nobility, awe, reverence, sublimity and, indeed, all the deeper and more veiled soul-phenomena. To a great extent the answer to this last question is to be found in the character and extent of the understanding of the music of Beethoven, which, even more than that of Bach, is the universal expression of human struggle towards the highest, at once in the life of the mind and in the senses. True, Beethoven's name figures frequently on the programs in the course of a musical season here, and there is no question that the pulse of the audience responds readily to such works as the "Fifth" symphony or the "Appassionata" sonata, but the genius of such music is so obvious and instantly arresting, that only the perverted or blasé individual could be deaf to its significance. But turn to that more intimate, metaphysical and spiritual side of Beethoven, so conspicuous in his later music, and few indeed even among the most enlightened are interested in unravelling its inner meaning.

It would be absurd, of course, to expect the average music-lover of this or any other country to be "en rapport" with such music, but there is a difference between realizing one's own limitations, frankly admitting "such music is beyond me," and saying "there is nothing to such music," which too often, I have noted, expresses the American viewpoint. The explanation of this discrepancy lies to a great extent in the fact that there is generally to be found in European musical centers an eclectic group to whom such music represents the "ne plus ultra" of the art, and this ideal is again reflected in the many who, themselves unable to rise to such spiritual heights, are nevertheless influenced by those who can, and so in turn indirectly influence public opinion generally. Put aside, however, this particular aspect of Beethoven's music and you are yet confronted with the outstanding fact that the impressive, dignified richness of style characteristic of even his average output finds little or no echo in the soul of the average American as compared with that of his cousin overseas.

Leave Beethoven and all that his music stands for, and compare the American with other races on the issue of music as an ex-

pression of "sentiment" generally. Now, the Latin and Slavonic races, while generally incapable of the attainment or even the understanding of the rarefied sublimity of the greatest Teuton composers, have a distinct, vivid musical sentiment and temperament of their own. The individualism of American sentiment, on the other hand, however marked a feature in general life, has remained so far unexpressed in music, not only in the field of composition (which all things considered is no matter for reproach), but in the *selective* appreciation of the public throughout the country generally.

How different in this is the case of England, which though practically destitute throughout her history of a native-born composer who could in a big way be said to have given voice to her national sentiment, nevertheless plainly features her individual sentiment, in the nature of the music her people favour! It is entirely characteristic, for instance, that England should have remained for so many years under the sway of Handel's careless strength, his virility, breadth and moments of true nobility, also that her people should have been particularly responsive to a certain rollicking vein in his music so essentially English in character. That the country should have perhaps unduly idealized him and shown scant discernment in sifting the grain from the wheat is quite another matter and one that calls for no comment in these pages.

The question is, What composer or composers are, or have been, selected by America as typically expressing the individual sentiment of the nation? As has been said before, there certainly exist specific elements in music which have their appeal to the typical American, but these do not necessarily involve sentiment. The love of movement and excitement, for instance, is after all more or less a physical propensity, while the marked receptivity here to modern experiments as opposed to the general impatience of the Classics, in many cases signifies merely an ambitious craving to be up to date.

All that has so far been said may read very much like an indictment of America's musical psychology, but this in reality is the last thing intended. The writer is honestly bewildered by the splendid enthusiasm shown alike by the students, teachers, and general public, towards an art of which so often the shell would seem to be more than the kernel.

Not for them is the unfolding of the composer's conception, the paramount issue rather is interest concentrated on the finest degree of polish and exactness in the more ornamental and tech-

nically interesting passages. In other words, note-perfection rather than interpretation is usually the ideal. Of course, this type exists everywhere, but whereas in the old world it constitutes the exception, here it is rather the rule.

Once again, I select England for comparison, and I do so partly because of the kinship in blood, partly because, of all the great races of Europe, England has been most consistently behind-hand in musical achievement. Even so, the contrast in the ideals of the two countries is unmistakable. Utterly lacking constitutionally in musical finesse, careless very often of details, the English music-lover has usually a sound instinct as to the essence and purport of the art. He looks on technique not as a thing absorbingly interesting in itself, but merely as an equipment necessary for adequate expression of the sentiment which induced his love of music in the first place. The American, on the other hand, frequently is satisfied with and really enjoys mere technical proficiency and display and does not approach music in a spirit of sentiment at all. All this does not imply that the musical public here will stand for anything wooden in the manner of performance; the American is too highly nervous and vitalized for that. No, there must always be life, but not necessarily sentiment, still less serious thought, in the performer's conception of a musical number. Again, "nuance" is keenly cultivated and highly appreciated, but more as a branch of technique than as a spontaneous expression of feeling. For instance, every mark of expression will be systematically studied beforehand, but in actual performance seldom will be heard the note of personal emotional conviction and the general effect is akin to that of a recitation in which every gesture, every rise and fall in the voice, is made to fit the situation, and yet the personality of the reciter has somehow not been projected into the story or poem. Criticism, it will be observed, has for the moment been diverted from the psychology of the audience to that of the native-born performer, but, of course, the one inevitably reacts on the other and it is always, in such cases, hard to judge on which of the two rests the original responsibility. What follows inevitably as a natural result of the attitude of both, is that the American audience of to-day is very much alive and most discerning in all that pertains to actual performance, but by no means equally so in judgment of the quality of the music presented. For this reason, while technical flaws are quickly observed and resented, superficial and meretricious readings of the composer's conceptions do not arouse anything like the righteous indignation they deserve. Again, but this is a purely tem-

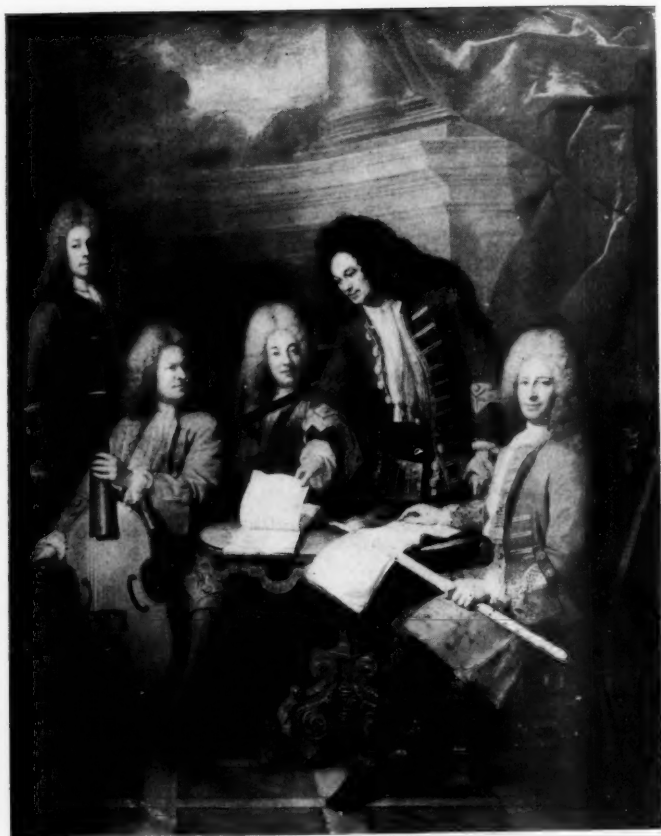
peramental limitation, the public is easily excited or thrilled but seldom indeed awed or deeply impressed, and this is manifested not only in the cheerful chatter that succeeds the hearing of the most profound and exalted music in the Concert-Hall, but in the immediate reaction to discussion of the topics of the day that follows, and dispels the halo of, the most solemn and devotional music of the Church services.

Broadly speaking then, two elements seem deeply rooted in the psychology of musical America; one the love of technical proficiency, the other that of quick sense-impressionism. Obviously, in neither lies the key to the understanding of music's greatest and loftiest mission—its solace in affliction—its refuge from the sordidness of life's details—above all its power to express what is too subtle and delicate for the painter's brush or the poet's pen. Do, however, the majority of music lovers pause to reflect on such matters? No; if there is any one thing that distinguishes the psychology of this country from that of others it is the universal horror of abstract reflection of any kind. This is as patent in the attitude of the church-goer as in the patron of concerts. Churches abound and sometimes prosper, though not by any means to the same degree as do Concert-Halls, but what is the general mental attitude in both cases? Certainly not that of reflection, still less of that searching of the heart and delving into the inner mysteries of life that are the essence alike of true religious worship and of the understanding of the highest in music.

To a great extent, of course, this is easily explained by the fact that America is always "on the rush" and therefore cannot spare the time for reflection of any kind. The fact that this "rushed" condition is in reality self-imposed and not one of necessity makes no difference. The result anyhow is that Americans call for immediate, if intangible, impressions in the field of musical sensation as in other things, and for this reason are more readily appealed to by modern musical experiments than by the classics of the past. Here are no profound emotional depths to be plumbed; instead are arrayed gorgeous masses of colour for the conquest of the senses, and in order to lift from the hearer the task of understanding what the music is all about, there is affixed a program explaining in so many words what was passing in the composer's mind. This represents a purely ephemeral aspect of the understanding of music; it is neither a healthy solace nor a force making for æsthetic culture, still less an inspiration to spiritual development.

Now for the other and brighter side of the picture. It is infinitely refreshing to note the highly vitalized, receptive, open-minded and impressionable mentality of the typical American audience. Hardly ever is to be seen a trace of that blasé, cynical element too often met with in the old world, and this notwithstanding the fact that the larger cities here are overwhelmed with musical events of every kind. As it is, seldom has the Conductor, Player, or Singer to face that most formidable of foes, "ennui" or indifference: and thank Heaven for this demonstration of America's fresh youth! So with the students as a body there is a young enthusiasm and zest, above all an unsparing endeavour to make the utmost of sometimes limited potentialities—often leading to quite amazing results—which have a most happy and rejuvenating effect on musical sojourners from older and more tired countries.

The more I proceed with the topic under discussion, the more apparent becomes the impossibility of attempting to separate the musical psychology of the nation, in certain respects, from its attributes in other directions. What, however, baffles the analyst is the incongruity of the so essentially objective, practical, definite mentality of this country, allied with an enthusiasm for an art in every way the antithesis of all the nation stands for in other ways. Music here, however, could never be defined as a false or simulated cult; the love of it along certain lines is whole-hearted and unstinted. Yet it is something not akin to that love of music existing in other nations, and the object of this article was to analyse those salient features in America's conception of the art which seem most to mark this peculiar and subtle divergency.



Musical tableau ascribed to Hyacinthe Rigaud.

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THE FLUTE AND FLUTISTS IN THE FRENCH ART OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

By LOUIS FLEURY

THOSE who visit the National Gallery in London have an opportunity of admiring an important French painting, in all respects worthy of the celebrated institution which harbors it, whose subject is one calculated to claim the attention of the historian as well as of the art lover. The work which we have in mind is the great quintuple picture by Hyacinthe Rigaud, which the author of the catalogue describes in the following terms:

ASCRIBED TO RIGAUD

2081. Lully and the Musicians of the French Court.

A 'cellist in grey, seated, left, full figure, looking toward Lully who stands, right centre, in a brown peruke, turning a leaf of the score—on each side of him a flutist, seated, in blue, drab and tabac—to the left stands a fourth musician, in slate color, etc.

We shall not quarrel with the cataloguer with regard to his caution in merely attributing the picture to Rigaud, although the excellence of workmanship and the style of this canvas favor the theory that Rigaud painted it. The art is not our own, yet we would have appreciated the exercise of greater caution in the description of the personages represented, for the one given is full of mistakes. We are asked to accept the portrait as one of Lully flanked by two flutists. Now this person who is standing, turning over the pages of a score with his right hand and holding a species of baton in his left, is a third flutist. It is quite beyond dispute that it is a flute which rests upon the table, and not the baton of an orchestral conductor. It might be remarked, incidentally, that Lully never used a baton for conducting, but a large cane and it was while insistently beating time with this cane on the floor that he wounded his foot in such wise that blood-poisoning set in, of which he died.

The portion of a title which may be seen on the score reads: "Trio by M. Lab. . . Sonates pour flûte," and the date of the

costumes worn by the personages of the picture leads to the supposition that the standing flutist may be Michel de la Barre while the two others who are seated may be either the brothers Hotteterre or the brothers Piesche (the latter supposition having been advanced by M. de la Laurencie, of whose notable researches I have often availed myself in writing this study). An examination of the Picard engraving which serves as a frontispiece to Hotteterre's "Treatise," and which undoubtedly represents Jacques Hotteterre, inclines us to accept M. de la Laurencie's hypothesis. As to the violinist—for the instrument is unmistakably a *viola da gamba* and not a violoncello—it is generally admitted that he is the famous Antoine Forqueray (Senior). We refuse to believe, as certain commentators contend, that the person standing behind him is his son. It is positive that the latter, born in 1700, was still a mere child, an adolescent, at the time when this picture was painted.

Yet, aside from these considerations, this picture contains an element still more surprising for the music-lover of this day: and that is the make-up of the instrumental ensemble represented. The musicians have evidently gathered to give a concert. Now, are not three flutes out of proportion in a quintet? To the modern music-lover this is an unheard-of proportion. Three flutes—it is exactly that number of flute-stands which complete an orchestra of eighty musicians. And three flutes in chamber music are never heard in our day. When a composer introduces a novel element in a chamber music composition (which is easily enough discovered, for the case is rare), he usually does so with wise discretion.

Now this abundance of flutists in the orchestra was something altogether natural in Lully's time, and even in the times of Hyacinthe Rigaud, who survived Lully by a matter of some fifty-six years. The orchestra, much smaller and much less varied than our own, comprised a large proportion of wind instruments, and the flutes played an important part in it. In chamber music we find flute sonatas for two, three and four parts common, and until well into the eighteenth century the flute was employed much more often than the violin. Now, from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the flute above all others was the *noble* instrument, the instrument preferred by music-lovers, especially among the aristocracy, and even by princes. The virtuoso flutists of the day occupied a position equal if not superior to that of the contemporary clavecinists and, especially, the violinists. The reasons for this superiority

are numerous; and the most interesting, from our point of view, is the special literature of the instrument. By reason of its abundance and particularly because of its quality, flute music held a leading position, immediately after that of the clavecin, in the instrumental music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is on a par with that of the violin, and exceeds that of the *viola da gamba* in importance; if it has so long been consigned to oblivion, the responsibility must rest mainly on the virtuoso flutists of the nineteenth century who, owing to an inexplicable aberration, deliberately neglected the magnificent repertoire bequeathed them by their predecessors. It is difficult to imagine why the violinists should have left so much less, in the course of two centuries, during the days of Tartini and Corelli, in the libraries. Nevertheless, such is the case, for the works of La Barre, Blavet, Naudot and other musicians of equal standing, engraved during their lifetime (approximately between the years 1705 and 1750) were never republished and, probably, never reappeared on concert programmes for a period of a century and a half.

This unjust neglect was due to two reasons which, ultimately, we will endeavor to define. At the present moment, within the limited space of this article, we will only try to show the influence of the flute in French art and in French society during the last years of the seventeenth century and toward the end of the eighteenth.

This influence has been a notable one: it is evinced everywhere and in every way. Whenever music is in question we see the flute appear. Visit a palace in the time of Louis XIV or Louis XV: every music room, as a rule, is adorned with musical subjects, painted on or carved in the paneling. The cases in which a flute is not included in the fascies of instruments represented, are rare. Visit our museums: Eustache Le Sueur wishes to present three of the Muses:¹ in accordance with the ancient tradition he places a flute in Euterpe's hands, a long transverse flute. Watteau paints a pastoral scene:² a shepherd, leaning tenderly over a young maiden, is playing the flute in the shade of a bosky dell. The sculptors people the parks of the period with flute-playing fauns. Yet these fauns, imitations of the antique, usually hold in their hands an instrument identical with that played in the orchestras of the day. Engravings, books, art objects, as soon as their subjects are of a musical nature, almost invariably represent a flute or a flutist.

¹Museum of the Louvre: Hall of the French Eighteenth Century.

²Museum of the Louvre: the Lacaze Hall.

Literature offers us examples of this exaggerated admiration, especially in the eighteenth century, the age of pastorals, of shepherds and shepherdesses. Allusions to the flute-playing shepherd are legion. Poems even, entirely devoted to the flute, are written,¹ and though the majority of these productions do not deserve to be rescued from oblivion, the fact that the musical instrument in question is their reason for existence gives us an idea of the place which it occupied in the artistic and social life of the epoch.

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That this extraordinary success was anything more than the result of a fashion, of a purely mundane predilection, it would be puerile to deny. Without in any wise lessening the merit of the instrument under discussion, we cannot credit it with enjoying such an excessive vogue without the aid of a little of what to-day we would term "snobbishness." However, as we have already mentioned, the flute, during the whole of the eighteenth century, was the instrument of princes and great lords. Such an example in high places was bound to find many imitators. In that epoch, a gentleman would have felt that he was lowering himself to play the violin; and there was little credit to be gained by taking up the clavier. But to breathe tender airs through an elegant tube of wood or of ivory, to play the shepherd with devoted and languorous attitudes, was, for the gentlemen of the court, showing the best of good form. This, incidentally, was the case not only in France. In Prussia, Frederick II furnished the example of a monarch who played flute like a genuine professional.² In England a large number of gentlemen cultivated the same hobby. A certain P. Walston, of Bath, had his portrait painted by Gainsborough³ in a magnificent costume of red and blue, holding his flute in his hand.

In France, the famous farmer-general La Pouplinière, a patron of the arts and of artists, whose concerts, given in his Château de la Muette, ranked as events, was himself painted by Van Loo in a house dress, playing the flute. And is it not characteristic that in a portrait (published with this article) attributed to David, that worthy *bourgeois* had himself surrounded by the attributes of his

¹The long poem entitled *Syrinx*, for example, by Denesle (1739).

²It may have been for him that J. S. Bach wrote the six admirable Sonatas which are numbered among his masterpieces, and it was for him that he wrote a fine Trio for flute, violin and bass, *Das musikalische Opfer*.

³It is in the collection of Mr. F. J. Wythes, London.



Portrait (David?) of an Amateur Flutist.
(From the collection of M. Capdevielle, Paris.)

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profession—several fat tomes of law books—and of his particular pleasure, two flutes?

The majority of compositions for flute, especially for two flutes without bass, were dedicated by their composers to rich and powerful pupils, members of the aristocracy. It is music well calculated for intimate performance, meant to be played by master and pupil in the seclusion of the latter's cabinet. It was a practical means of allowing the amateur to keep in touch with what was currently played in concert and at the Opéra. All that which in our own day is read at the piano, in a four-hand arrangement, was at that epoch played on two modest wooden flutes. From this dated the custom, in the collections of vocal *brunettes* published, of having each individual song followed by a little transcription for two ensemble flutes. We also have numerous collections of airs from operas, ballets and oratorios, transcribed for flute solo, for flute and bass, and, above all, for two flutes without bass.¹ There existed a whole literature to which we will return in the course of the present article, one which included an imposing number of musical works.

And all this music was easily and currently sold. There was a public to purchase it. In our own day a publisher very reluctantly consents to issue compositions for wind instruments. If he does so, it is very timidly. His argument is that these things "do not sell," that those who cultivate this music are comparatively rare. Nine times out of ten, if he finally decides to make so great a sacrifice, he demands that the composer make a special arrangement, so that the piece may be put forth for flute *or* violin.

It is amusing to find that during the eighteenth century the exact opposite was the case. The publishers of that time were no less careful of their interests than those of to-day, and neglected no opportunity to increase their sales. They also published works written for the flute as equally playable on the violin, and this was the more convenient because of the more extended range of the string instrument, which, incidentally, made it possible to play all music written for the flute on the violin with ease. Violin compositions, on the other hand, could only in rare cases be played on the flute, which could neither descend as low nor rise as high, nor play double-stops, etc., etc. So the publisher's first precaution, where the composer was concerned, was to make sure that his work, especially if it were an original violin piece, was equally

¹It has been claimed, though I have been unable to verify the assertion, that the whole score of the "Messiah" existed arranged for two flutes without bass.

playable on the transverse flute. Aubert (1723-1781), the violinist, published symphonic concerts for violins, flutes and oboes; Barthélemon (1731-1808), a violinist, published sonatas for two violins or two flutes; Mangean (-1756) and Marais (1656-1728), also violinists, did the same. The greatest among them, Jean-Marie Leclair, Senior (1697-1764), when he published his collection of sonatas, was also careful to observe this precaution. His second book of sonatas, for example, was written for violin and for the transverse flute, with a *basso continuo*. Now, a cursory examination of these sonatas—which, by the way, are admirable—proves that in the majority of cases they are unquestionably violin music, and that it argued great complaisance on the part of Leclair to be willing to make them playable on another instrument. He must have retouched them somewhat, and it is plain that, a slave to fashion, he was unable to avoid so doing.

Nor does the great Rameau escape. His clavecin pieces, reëdited and published as concert pieces, were manifestly written, as the composer conceived them, for violin and viola. Notwithstanding, he entitled them "Pieces for clavecin," in concert with a violin (or a flute),¹ for a viol (or second violin). He was obliged to take the taste of the public into account, probably after the composition was written.

François Couperin, the Great—by whom, alas, no original composition for flute exists!—nevertheless adds the following naïve note to his delightful *Rossignol et Amour*: "This *Nightingale* produces an effect which cannot be bettered when played on the transverse flute." And to the entire galaxy of clavecinists, organists and orchestral leaders who were busy under the protecting wing of the Court, we owe an important contribution to flute literature. Nor is it in some simple little piece, written once in a lifetime to please an amateur, that they manifest their activity. It is in whole books, each containing from six to a dozen sonatas, that these lesser masters compose for the fashionable instrument.

¹He does not make this concession without giving detailed directions: "Notice for the flute substituted for the violin: When chords are encountered, the best singing note should be sought, which is usually the highest. With regard to the notes which exceed the range of the flute, I have been compelled to use various signs to take their place without confusing the music. An 8, for instance, indicates that all the music from 8 to the letter U (which stands for the unison) should be raised an octave. In a rapid passage of several notes, it will be enough to substitute for those which descend too low, adjacent notes belonging to the same harmony, to repeat such as may be considered proper, except when, in these cases, two small note-heads are found among the others, no larger than pin-points, which exactly mark out those which the flute can play. The sign π indicates that the flute is not to begin before the note bearing the sign is reached. A note which descends too far below the fourth or fifth, may be carried to the octave above." (Author's Note, edition of 1741.)

Thus they yield to the pressure of necessity—there are patrons who must be satisfied, publishers who must be supplied; or they are largely moved by the certainty that their works will be largely purchased by the public. In this way Boismortier (1691–1765), Michel Corrette, Dollé, Dornel (1695–1765), Galliard (1687–1749), le Chevalier d'Herbin, Caix d'Hervelois, Mondonville (1711–1773), Montéclair (1666–1737), who were not flutists, have given us, in notable quantities, works in solo, duo or trio form in which the flute plays the leading part.

This fashionable tyranny, incidentally, has given us numerous masterpieces. If we may take the liberty of deviating somewhat from our line of progress, we might note the fact that Mozart, who did not care for the flute, was obliged to write, *to order*, two concertos for flute and orchestra, a concerto for flute and harp,¹ an Andante for flute and orchestra,² and three quartets for flute, violin, viola and 'cello. Mozart's delightful gifts did not suffice to create a masterpiece in a work written to make a little money while complying with an amateur's whim. In this connection, a recent discovery made by M. de Saint-Foix reveals a curious detail: the Trio of the Minuet in the Quartet in A is evidently a development, in three-four time, of the first *Air populaire*,

Ah, il a des bottes, il a des bottes, Bastien,

later vulgarized in the fifth figure of that famous dance, "The Lancers." As to the finale of the same quartet, sparkling with brightness, it is simply an arrangement of an air from Paisiello's opera *Schiavi per amore*.

The taste for the flute extending well into the nineteenth century, Beethoven (who in 1792 had written a little duo for two flutes without bass, which long remained in MS.) also had occasion to write some flute compositions to order. It was thus that in 1819 the six *Thèmes variés*, for piano solo or with accompaniment of flute or violin *ad libitum*, Op. 105, as well as the ten *Thèmes variés* (*nationaux*), with accompaniment of flute or violin *ad libitum*, Op. 107, came to be written.

Hitherto we have spoken of the flute only as a *solo* instrument, the flute of virtuosos and men of fashion. When we examine the orchestral scores of all the operas, however, from Lully to Gluck, we find that the flute plays an important part in them.

¹Written in 1778, in Paris, for the Duke of Guines and his daughter.

²Köchel hesitates between Paris and Mannheim as the birthplace of this Andante, composed in 1778. The fact that the MS. is to be found in the library of the Paris Conservatoire, inclines us to accept the former hypothesis.

This, no doubt, is due to the meagre resources which the orchestrations of the period offered with regard to variety, and the slight importance which the musicians attached to diversity of *timbre*. Their orchestration progressed mainly in masses, in "bundles." On a string-quartet foundation there were imposed, to reinforce sonority, at times oboes, at others flutes or bassoons, or again horns or trumpets. Lully, however, utilized a combination which had existed long before him, that of the "flute concerto" in which we find, beside the transverse flute, flutes of larger size, such as the flute in G, which supplied the bass and which, in certain concerts, was figured in such wise that it could be doubled by the *continuo*. The most famous example of these flute concertos is that which follows the *Prélude de l'Amour* in Lully's *Triomphe de l'Amour* (1681). It is a species of melancholy plaint, executed by four flutes, without other accompaniment. Lully has very skillfully utilized the tone of the transverse flute, at once tender and poetic. Later, Gluck, in the famous scene of the Elysian fields, in *Orphée*, carried to the highest degree of perfection the sweet and expressive power of the instrument.

For that which characterizes the use of the flute in the century of its glory is the composers' knowledge and tactfulness to see to it that they do not ask more of the instrument than it can supply. We find the following reflections in Ancelet's *Observations sur la musique*:

It will be admitted that the flute does not embrace all kinds and species of music, such as the airs of *demons*, of *furies*, of *warriors*, of *tempests*, of *sailors* and several others in which, at any rate, it is not used as a principal. It is better placed in tender and pathetic pieces and the accompaniments of the little airs and *brunettes* in the sonatas and concertos written by the best masters, who themselves, however, should not overdo it.

Honest Ancelet thus set down the part which the flute should play, and wished to confine the instrument well-nigh exclusively to the accompaniment of little salon or *cabaret* airs. He barely tolerated it in the sonata or concerto, for to do so robbed it of its best means of expression. Yet he foresaw, perhaps, that there would come a day when this pastoral instrument would be called upon to express sublime and agitated emotions, and that in the effort it would lose all its charm. From that day on, in fact, when skillful virtuosos such as Drouet, Tulou and Nicholson composed duos in a grand, inflated style for the instrument (which they themselves performed with indisputable mastery), the great composers of the age lost interest in the flute, which had been pro-

jected outside its natural frame. Yet this fact itself suggests that, without losing too much time in the process, we investigate how and why the flute obtained so great a vogue in France.

* * *

It seems probable that this vogue coincides with the appearance, in the French orchestra, of the transverse or cross-flute, formerly known as the German flute.

Vain efforts have been made to fix positively the date at which the German flute made its appearance in France. It is certain that it was known to the French long before it was currently used in the orchestras. We find the German flute alluded to in Rabelais.¹

The sweet or direct flute, on the contrary, was provided with an interior level or whistle.² The modern instrument which corresponds to the direct flute is the flageolet, a popular instrument which the village musicians still play in certain French provinces at the peasant dances.

Be that as it may, this very imperfect instrument still flourished in France toward the end of the seventeenth century, and one finds its trace in the majority of the music published at the time. It must have been largely used in the orchestras to the exclusion of every other flute. Father Mersenne, in his *Harmonie universelle*, gives us a proof altogether convincing of this fact in the very minute description he offers of the two instruments; the direct flutes are given first place. The plates presenting them show well-built instruments, whose type still may be seen in excellent specimens in the Instrumental Museum of the Paris Conservatoire. The description he gives of the transverse flute, on the contrary, for all that it is a detailed one, only shows us a very imperfect instrument, of which we find no trace elsewhere and which appears as an exotic type, an object of curiosity, not at all in current use.

¹At that time, however (the middle of the sixteenth century), flute players, above all, used the "sweet" or direct flute. This instrument, to-day entirely obsolete, was quite improperly included among the members of the flute family, "by extension," so to speak, if we may use the phrase. It is not our intention to introduce in the course of this article a study on the manufacture and character of musical instruments. We will merely remark that a flute characteristic is the absence of any interior mechanism. A tube pierced with holes, or a grouped series of such tubes, as in the case of the Pan-pipes, such was the flute of the ancients. To-day, the keys, a modern invention, have made no change in the principle which entrusts the lips of the flutist alone with the production of the sound. With regard to the flute in Rabelais, Gargantua learns to play the flute, the spinet, the harp, the German flute with nine holes, the viola and the sackbut (*Gargantua*, Chap. XXIII, 1535).

²To be exact, "the whistle."

This is true to such a degree that though he describes it so minutely we believe that good Father Mersenne, if we may say so, has "shown off" a bit in this case.

It is not until the year 1707 that we find evidence that the transverse flute is regularly employed. It was the French flutist Hotteterre, known as the "Roman," who established its first principles in his *Traité de la Flûte traversière*.¹

In spite of Father Mersenne, this author, whom we cannot ignore, probably for practical reasons, devotes the briefest notice by far to the direct flute, still in use in his day. "The direct flute having its initiates and partisans," he writes with some disdain, "as well as the transverse flute, I have found it not altogether useless to devote to it a short special treatise in this place." This is a complete reversal of the rôles in favor of the other instrument. It is clear that the few pages he devotes to the "sweet" flute are no more than a concession to a fashion which has passed. His real instrument is the transverse flute, and it is really on behalf of the transverse flute that he has written the 34 pages of detailed indications which make up his treatise. And, whether Hotteterre gave a new impulse to the study of the German flute, or merely followed the line of least resistance and took advantage of the newly-born mode to launch his work, from this time dates the definite acceptance of the transverse flute by French musicians. This is proven by the extent of the musical literature of the instrument, which continues to develop in proportion as we advance into the eighteenth century.

It must not be taken for granted, however, that the new instrument achieved its supremacy at once, and that it immediately drove its senior from the orchestra. For some time, as was the case with the *viola da gamba* which, little by little, yielded place to the violin, but which certainly was used contemporaneously with its rival, the transverse flute and the direct flute were used together. The illustration reproduced with this article shows two flutists taking part in the same concert, one playing a direct, the other a transverse flute.

In numerous scores we find the notice "for the transverse flute or the direct flute,"² yet this duality does not continue for long. It would be impossible for us to find an instance of a musician acquiring a reputation as a player of the direct flute. On the

¹Hotteterre, *Principes de la Flûte Traversière, ou flûte d'Allemagne, de la flûte à bec ou flûte douce, et du hautbois, divisés par Traités par le sieur Hotteterre-le-Romain, ordinaire de la musique du Roy.* Paris, chez Ballard, 1707.

²The scores of J. S. Bach, especially those of his cantatas, swarm with indications of this kind.



Concert champêtre.

(With Flute à bec and Flute traversière.)

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other hand, we find plenty of names of French musicians who, having achieved notable celebrity as players of the transverse flute, have made the tour of Europe, playing in foreign courts, and for good measure have left important works for their instrument.

The older instrument, by the way, was incapable of rivaling the newer one. The straight flute is abidingly impersonal. Though the tone be obtained without effort, it is always ready-made, monotonous, without color or expression. Whoever blows into a direct flute at once obtains a tone, but one and the same tone is obtained by everyone. In the case of the transverse flute, on the contrary, the personality of the player is everything. It is the lips which form the bevels or levers which direct the breath in a specific manner, and make the interior air current vibrate diversely. The result is that merely owing to the different formation of their lips, two flutists, playing the same instrument, produce sounds differing in quality, and that, Art aiding them, they are able to perfect their tone and acquire a marked personality. At that, these flutists had at their disposal only a very imperfect instrument, while at the same time the violinists and 'cellists possessed admirable instruments which our modern makers are glad to copy. The flutists never reached this model perfection, seeing that they used tubes whose holes were pierced in well-nigh haphazard fashion, lacking those exactly calculated proportions without which it is almost impossible to play absolutely in tune, unless by reason of exceptional talent. Hence, every flutist was doubled by a seeker, an inventor, who developed ingenious improvements for his personal use. In 1707, at the time when Hotteterre's *Traité* appeared, the flute had but one key (that which serves to produce E flat). A century later, owing to successive additions, it counted five, and, by degrees, there was developed the conception of the modern flute realized by the Bavarian Th. Böhm.

During the whole of the eighteenth century, however, the transverse flute was a tube of wood or ivory, pierced by seven holes, one of which was provided with a key. The sharps and flats were produced by means of complicated fingerings, the obstruction of half of a hole, etc. When we realize that works as difficult as the sonatas by Blavet and Naudot, the Mozart concertos, the Bach sonatas or cantatas, were played in a manner which compelled the admiration of connoisseurs by the virtuosos of that time on instruments so rudimentary, we cannot help but feel a retrospective admiration for artists capable of such feats of skill.

Thus we arrive naturally at a consideration of the great virtuosos flutists who, during the last three reigns of the old order, charmed the ears of their contemporaries. First of all there are the two ancestors of the transverse flute, Philibert Rivillé and François Pignon, called Descoteaux. The personalities of these two interesting artists were long shrouded in shadow. Even Fétis made them a single individual. Since then, however, their lives have been revealed, notably owing to the efforts of the late J. Écorcheville, in an article on the *Grande-Écurie du Roy* ("The King's Stable Music") in a Bulletin of the I. M. G. of 1903, and, more recently, in a charming article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (July, 1920), signed "Édouard Pilon." Philibert was a member of the king's band between 1670 and 1715. Descoteaux, born in 1644, was also a member of the *Grande Bande des Écuries*. In 1704 he played every day at the concerts given in Madame de Maintenon's apartments. In 1716 he was given, as a position on which he could retire, the charge of usher at the Royal Ballet. Nevertheless, his greatest claim to fame is not of a musical nature, and though he has left no work written for his instrument, his name is still associated with a creation even more enduring than the most charming sonata. A great amateur gardener, he was the original of La Bruyère's "The Tulip-Lover."¹ Matthieu Marais, advocate at the Paris parliament, in his memoirs on the Regency and the reign of Louis XV, gives a delightful account of a visit he paid Descoteaux in 1723, in Luxembourg. There the worthy man cultivated a little garden, at the same time cultivating philosophy and grammar as applied to song.

At about the same time flourished Pierre Gaultier of Marseilles, whom his biographers do not represent as a flutist. He is even credited with being a skillful clavecinist. Gaultier was first of all an ambulant impresario-musician. His life, full of action, and his tragic death have been told at length by Titon du Tillet. A producer of spectacles in Marseilles and Montpellier, he perished at sea with his entire company during a tempest, in 1697. We may presume, however, that he had some knowledge of the flute, for the only works by him which have survived are two duos or trios for flutes (or violins).

This romantic personage appears to have hit upon the idea of a kind of programmatic music in which he could give free rein to the emotions of his heart and narrate his life's adventures. In a Book of Trios, published by Ballard after his death, we find a

¹La Bruyère, *Caractères (de la mode, 2)*.

number entitled *Les Embarras de Paris* ("The Embarrassments of Paris"), which, in a way, gives an idea of what he meant to express. Another is entitled *Les Carillons* ("The Chimes"). Yet the most characteristic is assuredly that named *Les Prisons*. Gaultier composed it while incarcerated in the prison of Avignon. It is the second suite of a collection of three, of which the first bears the title *Les Heures heureux* ("Happy Hours"), and the third that of *Tendresse* ("Tenderness"). Without a doubt this tryptich essayed in some sort to represent the composer's life, and the Avignon prison must have been an austere one, for the beginning of the number breathes sadness and anguish. Yet we may also take for granted that Gaultier, with his happy meridional nature, quickly overcame this mood, for the sinister suite closes with a *Marche des Barbets* ("March of the Spaniels") full of spirit.

Les Prisons

Pierre Gaultier
de Marseille



In contrast to Gaultier, whose short life was full of disappointments, Jacques Hotteterre, called *le Romain*, enjoyed a decidedly privileged official position as a member of that Hotteterre dynasty which, from father to son, made and played wind instruments. His surname, "the Roman," came from a stay made in Rome before assuming his post at Court as royal chamber flutist.

Hotteterre's reputation is above all that of a theoretician. His "Treatise," of which we already have spoken, remained the best

work of its kind for a whole century, and this is proved by the fact that it went into several editions, was largely imitated and much plagiarized. Hotteterre, however, composed a certain number of pieces which are not negligible for the flute: two books of compositions for flute and bass; two suites for flute without bass; a book of sonatas; and a book of trio sonatas for transverse flutes. His Op. 2 (published by Ballard, in Paris, 1708) is embellished with a handsome frontispiece by the older Le Sueur, and is dedicated to the king. It seems worth while to reproduce here the text of this dedication, in which we are given a glimpse of the musical predilections of the reign of Louis XIV, and repeated witness is borne to the important part played by the flute in that epoch.

TO THE KING

The favorable attention which Your Majesty deigned to accord me when I had the honor of playing these pieces in your presence, to-day inspires me with the daring to present them to you. What greater meed of success could I hope for them than that of filling a few of those moments which the greatest monarch of the world may at times abstract from his more glorious occupations! It is an advantage, Sire, which I owe only to Your Majesty's extreme kindness, and it is in order to show my most humble gratitude that I take the liberty of dedicating these Pieces to Your Majesty, flattering myself that you will not repulse my homage nor my assurance that my life long I am, with the most ardent and profound respect,

Sire,

Your Majesty's

very humble, very obedient and very faithful servant
and subject,

HOTTETERRE.

To be frank, Hotteterre's music, for all it may have had the honor of pleasing Louis XIV, does not distinguish itself in our eyes by any special qualities. Hotteterre, as we see him, is more pedagogue than composer. His pedagogic leanings even influence his composition. Contrary to the majority of his brother flutists, yet in this respect following the example of the clavecinists of his time, he is lavish with recommendations for execution, notably as regards the manner of playing ornaments.

As a composer he is far outdistanced by his emulator and contemporary, Michel de la Barre, whose considerable output for the flute reveals a born musician, original and robust, one who, as we see him, is the most perfect representative of the French flute music of the seventeenth century (we mean the seventeenth century in the larger sense of the term, that is to say, to the year 1715, the date of Louis XIV's death).

Born in Paris, in 1675, he died there in 1743, after having been a member of the royal chamber orchestra and that of the Opéra. He was first of all a flutist, "an excellent player of the flute at the *Académie de musique*," according to the brothers Parfait; yet his activities were not confined to interpretation, for, besides his instrumental compositions, he was the author of a work, *Le Triomphe des Arts*, performed in 1700, and a dramatic intermezzo, *La Vénétienne*, performed in 1703. We only, however, will consider his instrumental output in this article.

It was considerable and comprised at least seventeen books of various pieces, of which we may still find, among the possessions of the National Library in Paris alone:

Two books of pieces for flute and bass.

Seven books of pieces for two flutes, without bass.

One book of pieces for two flutes and bass.

Three books of pieces in trio form, for violins, flutes and oboes, with bass.

La Barre's style is essentially broad and decorative, with that somewhat solemn pathos which characterizes his epoch. He evidently reacted to the powerful impress of Lully's genius, like the majority of the French musicians who, even long after Lully's death, acknowledged the Florentine's ascendancy. We find again in La Barre's suites those slowly moving Preludes, those rather pompous Allemandes, those pathetic Sarabandes, in which Lully excelled. La Barre modified their solemnity by the frequent introduction of the ornaments with which he embellished his scores. It may be said that without exception his works rise above the ordinary, and that he lends the simple combination of one or two flutes with *basso continuo* more than might be expected.

As a player he was especially fond of slow and pompous movements. The fact is proved in one of the suites for transverse flutes written by the organist-composer, Dornel (1695-1765), which bears the name of *Héronville*,¹ and contains a series of pieces entitled *La Chauvet*,² *La Descoteaux*, *La Hottelette*, etc. That one among the numbers which takes the form of a broad and noble Prelude is entitled, "M. de La Barre's favorite."

Were it not for the fact that we are limited in this article to the French flutists, we would have found a place for the Flemish flutist, J.-B. Loeillet, whose name, by the by, is essentially French. Born in Gand, during the second half of the seventeenth century,

¹Somewhat later Blavet gave one of his Sonatas the same sub-title.

²The patron of de La Barre.

he lived in Paris from 1702 to 1705, where he had several books of sonatas engraved. The larger and more fruitful part of his career was spent in London, however, where he died, very wealthy, in 1728.

La Barre is the last great flutist of the reign of Louis XIV. With the Regency begins an epoch still more brilliant for the flute virtuoso.

Hitherto the fame of the flutists had hardly penetrated outside the limits of the Court. Whether they performed in the apartments of Versailles or in those of a few great lords, their concerts were invariably private affairs, to which only the privileged few had access. With the establishment of the *Concerts spirituels* by Philidor, in 1725, the artists and the great public came into direct contact, and the taste for instrumental music (what we call "pure" or "absolute" music in these days) spread through a world which until then had heard no music save that of the Opéra.

It is, in fact, to a flute composition that belongs the honor of introducing this innovation. Anne Danican-Philidor, member of a prolific family of musicians, had hitherto distinguished himself only by the publication of a "Book of Pieces for the Flute" (1712) when, in 1725, he conceived the idea of giving concerts of "church music" in Paris, on those days when the observance of religious festivals closed the doors of the Opéra. For an entire year the repertoire was composed only of motets and suites for the violin, but in 1726, when Rebel and Francœur made their appearance as virtuosos in violin duos, the custom arose of having solo players take part in the programme, and Philidor accordingly produced a virtuoso flutist whose début was a striking triumph: this was Michel Blavet.

In fact, so great was the success he scored that thenceforward the flute acquired "civic rights" in the *Concerts spirituels*, and formed an indispensable element in all similar enterprises. Since the concert of 1726, when Blavet charmed the audience by his virtuosity and the impeccable clarity and correctness of his intonation (something well-nigh incredible when we remember that he held in his hands one of the flutes of that epoch), an uninterrupted succession of flute virtuosos appeared at the *Concerts spirituels* and elsewhere. First of all came Blavet, who was heard at every or nearly every séance either in duos or as a solo flutist; and then those others whose names we continually meet with in Michel Brenet's valuable work, *Les Concerts en France sous l'Ancien Régime*: Buffardin, appearing several times, notably after a sojourn in Saxony; the German Graef, who played in 1739; Rostenne,

who presented himself as a sort of a wind-acrobat, playing a direct double flute; M. Taillart, who played a sonata in November, 1725; another Taillart (probably the brother of the first), who played at the reopening of the *Concerts spirituels* in 1748, and who returned to them in 1751 when, in addition, he was a member of the orchestra of the Opéra. During the same year of 1751, we meet Wendling, precursor of a genre which later created a furore in both hemispheres, who played a flute obligato part for his wife, a singer. Voice and flute evidently formed a successful combination, for the Florentine flutist Angelo Vestris, coming from Italy with his sister, Madame Viola de Vestris, played a flute obligato part for her in 1752. At the same time the German Goetzel is heard, then the Roman Rutgi, who also scored successes as a composer with a descriptive symphony entitled "Tempest Followed by a Calm."

Sallentin, the younger, member of a large family of oboists and flutists, was heard at the same concerts in 1758. In 1773 Rault—also a flutist at the Opéra and probably the creator of the immortal solo in the scene of the Elysian Fields in *Orpheus*, a solo which Gluck wrote expressly for the Paris performances—was listened to in 1778, and Wendling was again heard, and also Wunderlich; in 1780 Mademoiselle Mudrich won applause with her agility. In 1781 Devienne, later celebrated as a virtuoso, the author of a standard method and an opera composer, appeared. In 1786 the brothers Thurner were heard in duos for two flutes.

Besides the *Concerts spirituels* we find the programmes of individual concerts given by flutists: that of Hartmann, at the Hotel de Bouillon, in 1781; and that of Schutzmann, in 1783. Nor have we as yet mentioned the names of Lucas, who must have played in the *Concerts spirituels*, and of Jacques-Christophe Naudot, who may have played in them, for one of his trios formed part of the repertoire in the inventory made in 1782; of Lavaux, of Leclerc, and others, whose names are revealed in various sources.

In so long a list one is obliged to make a choice. Hence we will consider in detail no more than five or six of these artists, who stand out among the others, either by reason of the accounts of their virtuoso successes which have come down to us, or because of their works. Yet before we discuss them, we will take the liberty of quoting the first stanzas of a long poem entitled *Syrinx, ou l'origine de la flûte* ("Syrinx, or the Origin of the Flute"), published in 1739 by the Sieur Denesle, and dedicated to Messieurs Naudot, Blavet and Lucas. It will be remarked to what lyric fervor (somewhat expansive, in truth, and richer in enthusiasm than in ideas) an admirer of the transverse flute could rise:

Maîtres si vantés dans un Art
 Auquel les Dieux et le Hazard
 Donnèrent autrefois naissance,
 Par une juste préférence
 Que le Goût ne peut démentir
 Je veux aujourd'hui vous offrir
 Les doux passe-temps d'une Muse
 Qui Apollon, si je ne m'abuse,
 Quelquefois daigne caresser.
 Puis-je, en effet, mieux adresser
 Et l'aventure et l'origine
 De la flûte, toute divine,
 Qu'à ceux dont le rare talent
 Nous rend ce bois plus éloquent
 Que ne fit le dieu Pan lui-même,
 Lorsque dans son ardeur extrême
 Ses doigts ravirent autrefois
 Toutes les Dées des Bois?
 On sait assez que votre gloire
 Pour se transmettre à la mémoire
 N'a pas besoin de cette encens.
 Ô que, tant que le Goût, en France
 Sous ses pieds foulant l'Ignorance,
 Sur ce monstre dominera
 Toujours votre renom vivra!

(Famed masters, who an Art adorn,
 That of the Gods and Chance was born
 In times that long have sped,
 By a just preference led,
 Which Taste cannot gainsay,
 I offer you this day
 A pastime sweet, a Muse's bliss,
 One Phœbus, if I'm not amiss,
 At times deigns to caress.
 Whom could more fitly I address,
 And origin and tale outline
 Of the flute, instrument divine,
 Than those whose talents rare dispense
 The gift of its wood's eloquence
 Beyond Pan's art to do as much,
 As when, with fervor's frenzied touch
 His fingers straying, knew to please
 The ravished Woodland Deities?
 So great your glory that in vain,
 Lest memory it not retain,
 This tribute seeks it to enhance.
 Ah, may, while Good Taste still in France
 Tread underfoot blind Ignorance,
 And o'er the monster lordship claim,
 Ever endure and live your fame!)

Even when making allowance for the custom of the time, and the exaggeration of the verse-makers of that day, such hyperbolic praise could only have been addressed to eminent artists.

Nothing is known of one among them, Lucas, and to our knowledge he has left not a single composition for his instrument. Regarding another, to whom Denesle gives the first place, Naudot, we have but little more information. We do not know when he was born, and it was not until quite lately that J.-G. Prod'homme has managed to find a document touching on his decease. Jacques-Christophe Naudot died in Paris, November 25, 1762. If we are to credit certain dedications in his works, he was the protégé of the Count d'Egmont, Duke de Gueldre. Our recent discovery of one of his trios in the repertoire of the *Concerts spirituels*, and the fact that his extravagant admirer Denesle was for a time a co-director of these concerts, leads us to suppose that he played at them. He was undoubtedly an excellent musician, and Quantz speaks of him with much approval in his autobiography, after his sojourn in Paris. Yet his true claim to fame lies in his compositions, notably many and varied, and which surely place him in the first rank of the lesser masters of the instrumental composition of his epoch.

His output included no less than 20 books of sonatas or divers pieces, among which 17 were listed in Ballard's catalogue during the composer's lifetime, and have been integrally set down. To these should be added three complementary duos not mentioned in Ballard's catalogue. In all we have:

- 6 books of six sonatas for flute and bass.
 - 4 books of six pieces in trio form for flutes and bass.
 - 2 books of six sonatas for two flutes without bass.
 - 1 book of six rustic pieces for musettes, viols, flutes, violins and oboes, with bass.
 - 1 book of six *babioles* for two viols or two musettes, direct flutes, transverse flutes, oboes or violins, without bass.
 - 1 book of six sonatas for viol and bass.
 - 1 book of six concertos (in seven parts) for one transverse flute, three violins, one alto, one bassoon and bass.
 - 1 rustic divertissement in trio form for musette or viol, flute and violin.
 - 1 book comprising various pieces for two hunting-horns, trumpets, transverse flute or oboe.
- Finally, twenty-five menuets for two hunting-horns, trumpets, transverse flute, oboe, violin and *viola da gamba*.

We have intentionally given this complete list of Naudot's works to emphasize the incredible neglect shown this fecund composer. And he has been unjustly neglected because, in spite of

the superabundance of his production, Naudot is never guilty of negligence. His sonatas for flute and bass are charming; those for two flutes without bass highly ingenious; and in his seven-part concertos, Naudot anticipates those *concerti grossi* which a few years later were to abound in French music.

With regard to Michel Blavet, on the other hand, there is plenty of information. Contrary to Naudot, who shunned official positions, Blavet, from his youth on, filled in turn the most brilliant offices. Born in Besançon, in 1700, of an artisan family, he showed notable aptitude for music at an early age. Blavet went to Paris when quite young, in 1723, at the urging of the Duke de Lévis, governor of the province. He had cultivated various instruments, notably the bassoon, yet it was the flute which was to give him the fame that endured throughout his career. The tale of his striking success at the *Concerts spirituels* has already been told. At the time he was only twenty-six, and was attached to the household of the Prince de Carignan. Once his fame had been established others disputed the honor of securing him, and he entered the service of the Count de Clermont, Louis de Bourbon-Condé, great-grandson of the great Condé. This nobleman made him superintendent of his musical establishment. He divided his time between his employer's estate in Berny and the Abbey of Saint-Germain des Près, which did not prevent his playing at the homes of various highly placed personages, such as the Prince d'Ardore and the Marquise de Lauraguais, nor joining the orchestra of the Opéra, where he was active from 1740 to 1760. Blavet, whose talent was not limited to the flute, had a work, *Le Jaloux corrigé*, performed at the Opéra, the première occurring March 1, 1753.

From time to time Blavet travelled, no doubt taking advantage of the liberty given him by his patron, the Count de Clermont. The details of his journeys have not been revealed. It is claimed that Blavet played at Potsdam before Frederick the Great.¹ It is even supposed that he visited Russia. The fact remains that information regarding Blavet's concert-tours is very vague. The MS. of a concerto composed by him is preserved in the Carlsruhe library, and may be accepted as a proof that he stopped in that city. This concerto, which the author of the present article has played on various occasions, is a charming work, worthy of the master's pen, for Blavet was a composer of rare merit.

¹*Trans. Note:* Riemann states definitely that Blavet played for Frederick the Great in the castle of Rheinsberg, when the latter was still Crown Prince of Prussia.

If his output is not as important as that of Naudot, yet it is not inferior to his in quality. It comprises, in particular, three books of six sonatas for flute and bass, which appeared, respectively, in 1728, 1732 and 1740; and three "Collections of Pieces, Little Airs, Brunettes, Menuets, etc., Arranged for Transverse Flutes (2 Flutes without Bass)."

These last collections contain, above all, arrangements of all the melodies which were fashionable at the time; but also include some of the composer's original preludes or pieces. In these Blavet does not show himself at his best; but rather in his sonatas for flute and bass, which rank with the best musical productions of the eighteenth century. They are, as a rule, gracious in style and well conceived (as is evident), in order to display the player's virtuosity. In their brilliant passages and in their more expressive ones, however, they invariably show balance and perfect good taste. It goes without saying that Blavet was well aware of the limitations of resource of the transverse flute, and that he never wrote anything which exceeded its possibilities.

Another merit of Blavet's was that he did not cast all his sonatas in the same mold. He was not afraid of dropping the obligatory introductory *Adagios* and the inevitable rapid *finale* movements for pieces of a less conventional character.

Thus, in the first of the "Six Sonatas" which we edited a few years ago, we find, instead of an *andante*, a double *aria* (major and minor), a species of *rondo* in G, entitled *l'Henriette* (surname of the Duchess de Bouillon, mistress of the Count de Clermont, to whom the sonata was inscribed). The second sonata, called *La Vibray*, contains a gavotte entitled *Les Caquets*, which is actually an amusing bit of musical chit-chat. In the third sonata (*La d'Héronville*), a *rondo*, *L'Insinuante*, appears to have been borrowed from a popular song. The *andante* of the fourth sonata is a "Sicilienne" which, as Mr. Fuller-Maitland has remarked in *The Times*, "is worthy to rank with the most famous Siciliennes of the great eighteenth century masters."

A kind of hunting air called *Le Marc Antoine*, and a melancholy gavotte entitled *Les Regrets*, supply the element of surprise in the fifth sonata; while in the sixth, under the title of *Les tendres Badinages*, appears a delightful *rondo*. I have purposely laid stress on these details. Among the reproaches often made the lesser eighteenth-century masters by their contemporaries, we find accusations of monotony, of the abuse of formulas. There is nothing, however, less monotonous than the ensemble of Blavet's compositions.

This king of the flutists of his age died in 1768, in the fine adjunct of Saint-Germain Abbey, still existing at this day. His colleague Buffardin was laid away in the tomb a few months earlier.

Buffardin, born 1690 in Marseilles, had a far more active career than the majority of his colleagues. In 1715 we find him in Constantinople, where, in the suite of the French ambassador, he meets Johann Jacob Bach, older brother of Sebastian, who was there as an oboist in the train of Charles XII of Sweden. Passing into the service of Friedrich August I, Elector of Saxony, he was the teacher of Joachim Quantz, who later was to win fame as the teacher of Frederick the Great.

He lived in Saxony until 1750, but made some brilliant appearances in Paris, the first in 1726, the year in which Blavet made his début; the second in 1737. He scored noteworthy successes on both occasions. He died in January, 1768, in Paris, whither he had returned in 1750, exhausted by a long illness and in a state of extreme destitution. Like many of the flutists of his day, he manufactured transverse flutes, yet neither his skill as a flute-maker nor his virtuoso talent sufficed to save him from wretchedness.

So great a virtuoso necessarily obeyed the law which demanded that he compose for his instrument, and Buffardin did not fail to do so, for Leclerc's catalogue of 1742 lists a book of sonatas for flute and bass. Most unfortunately, these sonatas thus far have not been rediscovered—at any rate, not in French libraries.

We should by all means conclude this long enumeration of the eighteenth-century flutists by conforming to the tradition which demands that this epoch come to an end with the downfall of the old *régime*; yet we must at least mention the amiable Devienne, whose début as a virtuoso appears to hark back to 1781, and who marks the transition from the brilliant eighteenth-century school to that, no less brilliant, yet musically much less valuable, of the nineteenth-century flutists. Devienne was born in 1759 in Joinville (Haute-Marne), and his first appearances in musical life were divided between flute and bassoon. It is as a flutist, however, that he won virtuoso fame. A wonderful portrait by David's brush, at present preserved in the Brussels Museum, presents him (a three-quarter view) about to play the flute. Appointed professor at the Conservatoire, the author of a method still in use to-day (largely rewritten at various times, a task which involved considerable labor), he died a maniac in the Charenton Asylum in 1803. His compositions are numbered by the hundred. He essayed all the forms, and wrote for all instruments and for every

kind of combination. The day may come when his instrumental compositions will be revived, when the passing of time will have ranged him among those musicians who challenge the interest of the musical archæologist. For the time being his works slumber forgotten. Devienne also composed several operas, the most celebrated among them being *Les Visitandines*, a charming work which long kept its place in the repertoire and which, only a few years ago, was still given in Paris. This graceful opera was performed in Paris at the height of the Terror and had the greatest success.

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With Devienne, as we have already stated, the brilliant galaxy of the flutists who lent their splendor to three reigns, up to the outbreak of the Revolution, came to an end. The flute still remains a modish instrument, but the "loud and noisy" style of music cultivated by the virtuosos of the beginning of the nineteenth century deflects the interest of the great musicians from the instrument. While, from Bach to Beethoven, all the great classics had contributed more or less to enrich the flute repertoire, none of the great composers of the first half of the nineteenth century deigned to write a single piece for the instrument. We need only mention Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms to show how tangible this assertion is. A happy reaction, most fortunately, has occurred in this respect during the past few years, and we need not despair of a revival, due to the collaboration of composers and virtuosos, of the brilliant days of the century before the last.

(Translated by Frederick H. Martens)

THE WORD MUSIC : ITS DERIVATION, INTERPRETATION AND MISAPPLICATION

By ORLANDO A. MANSFIELD

CONCERNING the origin of the word "music" there has been considerable divergence of opinion. Some people,—musical as well as otherwise,—have credited the term with an antiquity equal to that assigned to the art of music itself, while others have presumed that the period of its origin must have been identical with that of the foundation of the Anglo-Saxon tongue. The latter supposition, however, is discredited by the fact that the expression was not used in England until about the middle of the 13th century. Roger Bacon, writing about that period, employs the terms *musicales* and *musicalia*; while another variation, *musicalis*, is, probably, no earlier than A.D. 900. Undoubtedly these forms, in common with the French *musique*, were derived from the Latin *musica*, a word which came to the Romans, as most of their art terms did come, through a Grecian channel. The substantive *musica* will be familiar to readers of Cicero; and these will also recall the Ciceronian adjective *musicus*, e.g., *musicæ leges*, rules of music, as well as the substantive expression, *musicus*, a musician, and the neuter plural, *musica*, music. Here it is interesting to note that Plautus, in his comedy *Mostellaria* (The Spectre), writes, "*Musice hercle ætatem agitis*," a phrase which may be idiomatically translated or construed as meaning, "You are in clover," "You are indeed living luxuriously." In this case the word *music* is employed to convey the meaning of splendidly, luxuriously, or pleasantly. As such it constitutes not only the first instance we have observed of what we may term an unmusical interpretation or application of the word "music," but this adverbial treatment of the term in the original Latin is, we understand, extremely rare. The only instance we know of the occurrence of the expression is in the works of the popular Roman comedian just quoted.

In all probability the real origin of the expression "music" is to be found in the Latin *Musa*, which, in addition to being used to denote a muse in general, or the goddess of music in particular, was also employed to denote song or poetry; and, like the

Greek word from which it was derived, its meaning was extended to embrace all the arts over which the nine muses presided. Another derivation, set forth by Robert De Handlo, an English theorist of the 14th century, in one of his celebrated treatises, would associate the word "music" with the Greek term *Moys*, signifying water. This statement was accepted by the illustrious German theorist, Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680), the Jesuit priest-professor who fled from Germany in 1631 owing to the Protestant successes at that period of the Thirty Years' War, and eventually settled in Rome. But that celebrated English musical historian, Sir John Hawkins (1719-1789), disputes this derivation, on the ground that "such a Greek Word as *Moys* does not anywhere appear." Hawkins goes on to show that Kircher "elsewhere contradicts himself by asserting that *Moys* is an ancient Egyptian or Coptic word," and this, says Sir John, "is rather to be credited, because it is said in Scripture that Moses, or as he is called, Moyses, was so named because he was taken out of the water." Sir John further adds that the Egyptian pipes were made of reeds growing by the Nile, "wherefore," he continues, "it is said that without water, the efficient cause of music, there can be no sweetness of sound." In conclusion Sir John, with true legal precision, describes Kircher's derivation as a "wild and extravagant conjecture"; and winds up by giving it as his opinion that "the most probable derivation of the word 'music' is from the Muses, who are said to have excelled in it, and are constantly represented playing on musical instruments."

And if there has been as much postulation as proof concerning the origin of the word "music," there has been an enormous amount of gratuitous assumption concerning its meaning. That it has meant anything more than an ordered succession of sounds, heard singly or in combination, will come as a surprise to many and as somewhat of a shock to more than a few. Yet Alexander Malcolm, in his "Treatise of Musick, Speculative, Practical, and Historical," of 1721, one of the earliest Scottish books on the theory of music, says, that amongst the Pythagoreans and the "Platonicks" the doctrine obtained "that every Thing in the Universe is Musick." On the other hand, Hermes is credited with teaching that music is "The general knowledge of order"; while Carlyle declares music to be the very speech of angels. Coming down to earth we must observe that so modern an authority as the Century Dictionary gives as legitimate meanings of the word music, "lively speech or action; liveliness; excited wrangling; excitement; diversion; sport and sense of the ridiculous."

The latter meaning, concerning which we shall have something more to say presently, is peculiar to New England; while that of excitement is an American colloquialism. The Standard Dictionary of the English Language gives as colloquialisms of the United States the following meanings of the word music, viz.:—"heated argument, lively or passionate discussion, and excitement"; also, as a New England colloquialism, the meaning "amusement, relaxation or recreation, fun," and hence "appreciation of the humorous or the droll." In the opinion of the writer of this article these meanings derive from the Pilgrim Fathers and the settlers of the early Stuart periods. These all spoke the Elizabethan or Jacobean English, the best expression of which is to be found in the Authorized Version of the Scriptures. Here the word translated in one case "music" and in the other "song," is used in the sense of sport, laughing-stock, or object of ridicule. Thus, in Lamentations iii, 14, the prophet declares, "I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day." Then, in the 63rd verse of the same chapter, we have the complaint, "I am their musick," which, in the Revised Version, is made to read "song," as before. Now, whatever may be put down to the credit or discredit of the Pilgrim Fathers, it is well to remember that, like Apollos, they were "mighty in the Scriptures." So we may safely venture to conclude that it is to their acquaintance with, and affection for, Scriptural parlance and quotations, that we owe such use of the word music as would tend to make it mean something akin to the expressions "sport" or "diversion."

Dr. John Ogilvie, in his Comprehensive English Dictionary of 1864, defines music, *inter alia*, as "an entertainment consisting in melody or harmony." Here, it will be noticed, the idea of sport or diversion is again prominent. And in some parts of England to-day an injunction to children to "cease your funning," or to be serious, is often conveyed by means of the expression "stop your gamut." Then, referring again to the use of the word "song," as employed in the book of Lamentations, who has not heard the expression "sold for a song"? Meaning, of course, sold for a mere trifle.

The Century Dictionary also draws attention to the fact that in golfing "music" denotes the degree of suppleness in the shaft of a club. Thus W. J. Travis, in his Practical Golf, says, "The more music there is in the shaft, the greater is the liability to slice or pull."

In Ireland "music," amongst other things, was held to mean the reverse side of a coin, because the latter bore the Irish harp.

Hence "skull or music," would be equivalent to the English "head or tail."

Shakespeare and some of the earlier dramatists, e.g., Beaumont and Fletcher, use music as identical in meaning with the expression a "band" or company of musicians. Thus, in II Henry IV: "The music is come, sir." "Let them play." "Play, sirs." In 1575 an entertainment provided for Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth Castle, was thus described by Robert Laneham: "This Pageaunt waz clozd up with a delectable harmony of Hautboiz Schalmz Cornets and such oother looud muzik." As a synonym for the word "music," many of the Elizabethan writers employed the expression "noise," e.g., Ben Jonson, in his *Silent Woman*, writes of "a noise of fiddlers." The same term was also used for a band of instruments, e.g., in the same work Jonson writes, "Do you want any music? I have brought a variety of noises." Then in his *Bartholomew Fair* he has "a delicate young noise" (i.e., band); and so Shakespeare in II Henry IV, writes, "see if thou canst find out Sneak's noise"; while Spenser in his *Faery Queen* had already written of "a heavenly noise." Milton's later use of the word in the expression "melodious noise" implies the synonymous employment of the term as an equivalent of "music."

And here, perhaps, is the best place for us to utter and enter our protest against that abuse of the term "music" which would make the expression stand for the pianoforte. Who has not heard of the atrocious expression "music lessons," when "pianoforte lessons" was intended? And who, at one time or another, has not seen an advertisement from some more or less ill-informed teacher announcing that he or she would give "lessons in music" or would be glad to receive "music pupils"? Whereas, in each case, "pianoforte" was the word intended. We hear a great deal nowadays about the tyranny of the organ, the tyranny of the choir, and similar complimentary epithets. Is it not about time that we cleared our minds of cant and frankly acknowledged the tyranny of the household instrument? The *London Evening Standard* in an early issue of 1923 alluded to the Russian church service as being "without music," meaning, of course, without instrumental accompaniment. Whereupon the editor of the *Musical Times* remarked, "The old and ignorant distinction between music and singing dies hard."

By the plural form, "musicks," the 17th century organists and organ builders often designated the short keys of the organ, now popularly termed "black keys," although in bygone times

these were more frequently white, the longer keys being then coloured black. And although puns on the substantive are few, it has been reserved for one of Mr. Louis Wain's recent creations of our feline friends to be described as "mew-sick."

The expression "band of music," meaning a company of musicians, is as old as the Elizabethan age. Only in those times it was spelled "musitions." Thus, William Swayne, in publishing the Psalter of his friend, William Damon, in 1591, describes the deceased psalmodist as "late one of Her Majesties Musitions." But the phrase, "a piece of music," is quoted in Dr. Joseph Wright's *Dialect Dictionary* as meaning a musical instrument. And in this sense it is often used in the West of England, where, once upon a time, a worthy farmer endeavouring to express to the writer his objection to the employment of the serpent in the local church orchestra, declared, "We doan't nead that there peeas of baas music." And because the performer on that "peeas of baas music" felt it to be his duty to continue to "praise the Lord with instruments," sundry and divers members of that congregation betook themselves ecclesiastically "to fresh woods and pastures new."

The expression "to make music," used in the sense of performing music, generally in a more or less friendly and intimate way, is by no means obsolete. Nor need we hope that it will ever become so. To us it sounds genuine. It seems to ring true.

The verbal use of the term "music" is now practically unknown. "To music" has been interpreted as meaning "to influence by music; to set to music; to describe musically; or to produce music"; or even "to entice or seduce with music." Thus, in Timothy Davies' "The Gentleman Instructed" (1713), the reader is warned against being "fiddled and musick'd into Hell." This, we take it, is but another way, at once inaccurate, inelegant, and unpolite, of indicating the extremely florid character of that "slippery slope" familiarly known in certain circles as "the downward path."

And now to turn from the verb to the adjective. Spenser used the word "musical" as synonymous with music, in the line

to fetch home May with their musical.

Shakespeare, in *I Henry IV*, identifies or associates it with a facetious or witty meaning, e.g., "Then should you be nothing but musical, for you are full of humours." This Elizabethan use was undoubtedly carried over to New England, where, according to the *Standard Dictionary*, "musical" is still the New England slang

for amusing, funny, or absurd. Our opinion finds confirmation in the pages of no less an authority than John Pickering, of Boston, who, in 1816, in his "Vocabulary and Phrases which Have Been Supposed to Be Peculiar to the United States of America," asserts that in his day, in New England, "musical" was used in the sense of "humorous." We venture to wonder whether this is the sense in which the word is intended to be understood when we see it in the well-known advertisement which constantly appears, or used to appear, in the columns of certain papers, enquiring for a lady one of whose requirements for a more or less desirable position is or was that she "must be musical." We hope our supposition is correct. For the sake of the lady, of course. And further, we are led to wonder again whether this interpretation of the word "musical," and the corresponding interpretation of the term "music," may not indicate their common origin from the word "amuse." Such is the opinion of the Century Dictionary. We hope, however, that this authority is not correct, as we have no liking or regard for what a groom (driving a squealing cat out of his stable) once described as "a(mews)ing mewsick."

From the feline to the equine is not a far cry, so we next note that in the Cumberland fells of good old England a horse with defective breathing, technically known as a "roarer," is often termed "musical." "The weak point about that pony," said a friend to the writer on one occasion, "is that he is so musical."

An absolutely improper use of the word "musical," whether dignified or disgraced with a final "e" or otherwise, e.g., "musicale," is its application to a musical gathering or concert. This mongrel term, so regrettably popular in America, was cordially detested by the elder D'Israeli, who described the expression, in his *Curiosities of Literature*, as a cant term "still surviving amongst the confraternity of frivolity." Would that his pungent strictures could help us to get rid of this objectionable hybrid, which hangs like a veritable Old Man of the Sea around the necks of most American writers and conductors.

In conclusion we note one or two other obsolete expressions. The Editor of the *New Music Review* quotes Mortimer Collins, of 1873, as using the word "musicist." This, however, bad as it is, is not nearly so naughty as "pianoist,"—an expression we once heard from a College professor. We have already alluded to the use of the word "musitions" in the Elizabethan age. The House Accounts of Charles II, now, we believe, preserved in the State Paper Office, show that in the year 1663, "Captain" Cooke was paid £3 for the attendance at St. George's "feast," at Windsor,

"of Mr. Bates and Mr. Gregory, two other Music'ons there." More than two centuries and a half later, the celebrated amateur musician William Gardiner (1779-1853), the Leicester stocking manufacturer, the friend of Haydn and Beethoven, and the author of "The Music of Nature; an attempt to prove that what is passionate and pleasing in the art of singing, speaking, and performing upon musical instruments, is derived from the sounds of the animated world," quotes a letter received from a clerical friend, Dr. Parr, of Norwich, in which the latter says, "I have often joined in singing with minor canons and other *musicianists* at Norwich." Then Thomas Moore speaks of "musicianesses," which need not surprise those of us who are familiar with the dialects of the West of England. There a male performer is often termed a "musicer," a "musicianer," or even a "musican." According to the Standard Dictionary "musicianer" is still used in America as a disparaging term for a musician.

But the terms "musicry," meaning the art of music; "musicness," the quality of being musical; and "musicate," to set to music, are all practically dead and past revival, although the last-named expression has a Latin origin, *musicatus*, meaning "set to music." Fortunately for us the English language is sufficiently rich in musical expressions, or in terms wherewith to denote matters musical, that it is quite unnecessary for us to deplore the loss of these expressions or to desire their resuscitation. Nor need we vex our righteous souls as to whether music shall be spelled with or without a final "k," or even with a "z." All we need concern ourselves about is to see sharply to it that we have, as Shakespeare would express it, music in ourselves.

PURE MUSIC AND DRAMATIC MUSIC

By PAUL BERTRAND¹

IT has long been a commonplace to affirm the supremacy of contemporary French music and to remind ourselves that no other school shows a like vitality or shines with such lustre. But though symphonic music in France has for the past half century continually increased in brilliance, the music of the theatre, subjected as it has been to opposing tendencies, has now reached a stage of uncertainty the cause of which it may be useful to investigate, if only to attempt a suggestion of its ultimate orientation.

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It is universally recognised that music, preëminently the language of feeling, may be expressed in two very different ways that are essentially distinct.

Pure music aims above all else at the esthetic grouping of sounds; having no direct recourse to poetry it expresses feeling only in a way that is vague and general, undetermined by precision of language. Here music holds sovereign sway. Having to suffice unto itself, it is compelled to maintain, of itself alone, a balance of form calculated to satisfy the intellect at all times and consequently to sacrifice part of its intensity of expression.

Dramatic music, on the other hand, subordinates music to words, gestures, actions, largely absolving it of all concern as regards balance or form, seeing that poetry, the language of intellect, intervenes in direct fashion, and music simply strengthens it by contributing all the power of expression it can supply.

These two terms, therefore, pure music and dramatic music, do not represent an arbitrary classification of musical productions, but two different—and to some extent opposite—conceptions of the rôle of music. The result has been that in every country in accordance with the particular tendencies of the race and in every school in accordance with the nature of each musician one of these two conceptions has always grown and developed at the expense of the other.

¹By courtesy of *Le Ménestrel*, where the article was originally published in June, 1921.

Now, the Latin genius, wholly objective and enamoured of clarity and preciseness, has always favoured the preponderance of dramatic music in Italy and France, whereas pure music has been more particularly adapted to Germany, whose art, being more interior and subjective, shows a certain tendency in the direction of the abstract.

In consequence, French music remained almost exclusively dramatic, right on to the latter half of the nineteenth century. Originating in the popular song, from the very first it endeavoured to attach itself to performances of various kinds (liturgical dramas, mysteries, profane gestures interspersed with dancing); from being monophonic it became polyphonic at the time of the Renaissance; then the taste for royal and princely fêtes and *divertissements* favoured the development of opera in its diverse forms to the almost absolute exclusion of pure music.

This latter did not really assert itself in French art until half a century ago, in the persons of Camille Saint-Saëns and César Franck. These two masters succeeded in a venture which a few French musicians, and more particularly Méhul, had already tentatively outlined at the end of the eighteenth century. It was not from them, however, that they obtained their inspiration, but rather from the glorious exponents of German art: Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn. It was from these that they borrowed the traditional schemes of the fugue, and especially of the sonata and the symphony, introducing more or less noteworthy modifications in the treatment. Thus did they open up a path for the so-called "symphonic" modern school, which, in imitation of the German classics, looks upon the symphony as the most complete and sublime form of pure music.

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In France, Saint-Saëns and César Franck manifested a tendency to which the Latin genius had hitherto shown itself but moderately attracted. In pursuance of a stimulus corresponding to that followed by Brahms in Germany, they attempted to restore the sonata-symphony form, though this latter seemed to have accomplished everything of which it was capable in the music of Beethoven, who himself had finally perceived the necessity of abandoning it. The sonata-symphony betrays an irremediable decadence in those of his successors who have remained faithful to it. Both Saint-Saëns and Franck worked along parallel lines, each following his own temperament: the one profoundly French

in harmony of construction and the deductive logic of development, in distinctness of ideas and luminous clarity; the other more sensitive, less anxious about strict balance of structure and emphasis of ideas, creator of the so-called cyclic form realised by systematising the thematic affinities latent in Beethoven's final works.

Saint-Saëns's independent and individualistic mind prevented him from assuming the leadership of a school or exercising upon the musicians of his time more than the influence—though it was considerable—resulting from the prestige of his work. César Franck, on the other hand, an artist with the soul of an apostle, gradually affirmed his personality in meditative effects which radiated on all sides and affected powerfully the minds of his many disciples. A sort of new tradition was thus created by him, even without his wish, owing to the mystic influence created by the value of his teaching and his great kindness of heart. He left behind a group formed almost exclusively of eager and cultured amateurs, inspired like himself with a somewhat supercilious respect for their art, disdainful of convention and facile success, and determined to carry out with all their might what they regarded as a sacred task: the renovation of French musical art.

The religious spirit—in the highest sense of the word—which animated César Franck continued to influence his pupils. In seeking, however, to become a principle of action, this spirit had to endeavour to acquire greater power and cohesion by retiring within itself; it thus culminated in the constitution of a sort of church, somewhat narrow though only the more active on that account, with its rigid dogmas, its chapel which dispensed teachings tinged with a strictly intellectual discipline, its high priest, the somewhat stern custodian of immutable Truth definitely stereotyped as a new gospel, and finally its inquisitors, ever ready to utter anathemas against all whose culpable eclecticism refused to bow to their orthodoxy. This church had its *thurifers*, giving free vent to a noisy and aggressive enthusiasm which one would gladly have liked to regard as always sincere. However, they largely helped it in exercising a certain influence, at first salutary enough, though destined finally to become disastrous, as invariably happens when any organism wilfully disregards the principle of evolution, which is the law of life itself.

The Franckist school endeavoured to advance pure music at the very time when theatrical music, then at the height of its popularity, seemed to have entered upon a path of the most pitifully decadent tendencies. Influenced by Auber, and more

especially by Meyerbeer, this school aimed no longer at the strengthening of poetic feeling in its most deeply human elements, but rather at a coarse and over-vivid colouring of material facts, at the use of conventional formulas to express a pathos that was wholly external. In the name of Art thus sadly betrayed, a reaction was inevitable, and it seemed to the new school that this reaction must be effected by the cult of pure music which alone could restore the sense of sound forms, and purify and enrich the language of music by developing technique as much as possible. With this idea in mind, the Franckist school built up an imposing ensemble of very remarkable works, testifying to a consummate, extremely noble, and often somewhat strained art, though an art wherein thought transcends feeling; one which, with a sort of mingled disdain and modesty, seems to mistrust both sensibility and emotion.

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Having recognised as a fundamental axiom the supremacy of pure music, the new symphonic school was naturally led to claim that dramatic music ought to be regarded as an end, not as a starting-point, and that no musical theatre really worthy of the name could be created without a lengthy practice in sonatas and symphonies. This bold affirmation betrayed an utter misunderstanding of the sort of antinomy separating the two conceptions, and the entire history of music testified against the truth of it.

Indeed, the great symphonists such as Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Franck, etc., generally refrained from approaching the theatre or shone only as exceptions, whereas the most illustrious dramatic musicians: Gluck, Weber, Wagner, Rossini, Verdi, Gounod, Bizet, Massenet, etc., paid scarcely any attention to the forms of pure music. Mozart alone excelled equally in both kinds of music: a miracle which has happened but once and will probably never happen again. Lalo, who has produced a single dramatic master-piece: "*Le Roi d'Ys*"—as Beethoven in the case of "*Fidelio*"—is preëminently a symphonist like the great German master. The same may be said regarding Saint-Saëns, whose theatrical production, though fairly prolific, rose only once—in the case of "*Samson and Delilah*" which is in reality more of an oratorio than a lyrical drama—to the level of his symphonic work. On the other hand, Berlioz and his continuers, like Gustave Charpentier, exclusively represent dramatic music, even when they do not write for the theatre.

After all, this absolute differentiation seems quite logical if we remember that it is grounded on the opposition of two tendencies difficult to reconcile: the one aiming only at the intrinsic value of music, the other unhesitatingly sacrificing music to scenic effect, to truth and intensity of expression. In his dedicatory letter, introducing the score of "Alceste," Gluck said:

It has been my aim to reduce music to its true function: that of aiding poetry to strengthen the expression of feelings and the interest of situations without interrupting the action or damping it by superfluous embellishments. . . . It is my idea that instruments should be used only in proportion to the degree of interest and passion depicted. . . . I have avoided making a display of difficult passages at the expense of clearness, nor do I attach any importance to the discovery of a novelty unless it is called forth naturally by the situation and bound up with the expression of the piece; in a word, there is no rule whatsoever that I have not considered it my duty to sacrifice with a good grace to obtain the effect I wanted.

It would be impossible to state in more strikingly exact terms the principles that underlie musical drama, and we feel disconcerted at this wilful confusion between concert and theatre, at this obstinate determination to transfer to dramatic music the conception and methods of pure music, thus implying in one and the same musician the inevitable coëxistence of two widely divergent personalities.

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All the same, the disciples of César Franck stubbornly undertook to put their doctrine into practice. After borrowing from Germany the scheme of the sonata and the symphony, they introduced the *lied*, which is the most intimate expression of dramatic music; then they endeavoured to obtrude upon the theatre with works which contained all the essential elements of their instrumental compositions, though manifestly lacking in true dramatic power. Under the inspiration of Wagner, they borrowed from him his principles and methods, though they did not allow themselves to be won over by his lyricism. Following his example, they frequently strove to raise their subjects to the representation of symbols of a lofty human signification. Their developments, however, of an essentially musical order, remained subject to the laws of pure music instead of complying with the requirements of scenic action alone.

To quote but one instance from among many, I would call attention to the musically admirable "jewel" scene in the first act of Paul Dukas's "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue," which has recently

been put on the bill again. In masterly fashion the composer develops this scene, allowing himself to be dominated by the spirit of the classical *scherzo* (exactly as in his "Apprenti-Sorcier"), though without taking pains to follow the action very rigorously, step by step.

Musicians and such auditors as had been educated in the concert-room recognised with keen interest the nobility of conception, the ingenious fidelity of technique, the wealth of language and instrumental combination; but these qualities, though of primary importance in symphony, appeared of secondary importance in the theatre, where they generally asserted themselves at the expense of expression, tending to submerge the action which they ought rather to have emphasised. The main body of the public—making allowance for a few snobs—listened with bored politeness to these works, whose merits were loudly extolled, though they seemed to represent the very negation of theatrical art. The symphonic school consoled itself with manifesting aristocratic scorn at the incurable and traditional "bad taste" of the masses, by whom they would have considered it a disgrace to be understood at all! A boastful deduction which, if sincere, would betray an utter misunderstanding of the social rôle of dramatic art. This art, indeed, is not intended solely for the pleasure of a refined élite; it should succeed in touching the masses who, though disconcerted by new and novel forms, are none the less, whatever may be said, fundamentally sensitive to beauty and emotion when a clear appeal is made to their mind and heart.

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From the theatrical point of view, the symphonic school had but little effect on the public. Many composers, however, were captivated by the purely musical value of these works as well as by their great technical interest: a consideration to which many artists are always tempted to sacrifice everything, by looking upon the "trade" as an end, not as a means.

On the other hand, the disciples of César Franck, powerfully organised and united by a perfect community of doctrine, endeavoured to impose their dogmas with the most methodical obstinacy. Impelled by a blind faith, by the combative exclusivism which every new religion imposes on its neophytes and which constituted the secret of their power, they proceeded by *a priori* affirmations—without being troubled about damning facts for which they were ever ready to find casuistical explanations—to argue in favour of their position.

They therefore set themselves up as sole custodians of the pure French tradition, and this they did with the most tranquil assurance, building up an entire filiation of French art wherein the predominance of pure music was at least contained in embryo, while all else was thrust into the background. Unable to look upon dramatic music as altogether negligible, they extolled Rameau the better to crush Gluck, whose breadth of outlook along with an element of tragedy did not, in their eyes, compensate for the feebleness of his music, a feebleness certainly very marked in the monotonous and stilted composer of "*Castor et Pollux*," of "*Hippolyte et Aricie*." They showed but little appreciation of Berlioz, whom they regarded as too lyrical, having eyes mainly for his poverty in the domain of harmony and his unsuitability to developments of a purely musical nature. On the other hand, they exhumed and gave a prominent place to certain second-rate musicians, forgotten or ignored, who helped them to frame an artificial evolution of the "true" French music.

They placed at the service of their propaganda their influence, which was considerable, and above all that remarkable centre of education represented by the Schola Cantorum, whose prosperity had been assured by the continued support of the most active amongst them. And since, on the other hand, certain of these ingenious doctrinaires were also brilliant critics—though quite devoid of goodwill towards any artist foreign to their circle—it is easy to see how the Franckist school succeeded in impressing a considerable number of musicians, inspiring in them mingled respect and fear, and exercising, even over musical theatrical productions, an influence from which they have not yet wholly freed themselves.



An entirely different tendency, however, soon manifested itself in the person of an artist who, by enabling music to serve a refined dilettantism, substituted sensation for feeling and impression for expression. Claude Debussy, freeing himself from all preoccupation as regards form, revealed a sensibility hitherto unknown. He expressed in penetrating fashion intuitive impressions, by means of a close association between harmony and timbre wherein all the clear-cut lines appeared to subside into a kind of iridescent halo.

This conception coincided imperfectly with the principles of pure music which Debussy cultivated but slightly apart from his

"Quatuor," the developments of which, under the guise of free variations, by no means reach a classic level; all the same, it introduced into dramatic music a very special element, in contrast with the tendencies of the Franckist school. It subordinated music not only to poetry, by restoring the old Florentine recitative, but also to the other arts, aiming at suggesting atmospheres rather than at expressing feelings.

An artist of rare spontaneity, considering rightly that music was conceived too much as something to be written down rather than as something to be heard, Debussy confined himself to expanding, by means of mysterious harmonics in the world of the senses, the vibrations of the universal soul, of which he made himself "l'écho sonore," as Hugo expressed it. This art, the expression of a wholly personal sensibility, could not become a fundamental doctrine. Still, there emanated from it so seductive an influence that it exercised a magical attraction, with which the flamboyant radiance of Wagnerian art can alone be contrasted. The consequence is that numerous musicians have ploughed the same furrow as the author of "Pelléas." Devoid, however, of his peculiar sensibility, they have borrowed from him only his material methods, extremely poor and restricted. Subtle collectors of far-fetched harmonies and unusual sonorities, they succeeded in carrying out a sort of musical pharmacy, occasionally interesting, if but momentarily, by reason of its over-refinement. Still, though capable of supplying material for paltry pastimes, or, at most, for a few mimicked scenes, it is powerless to constitute the essential principle of theatrical music.

Neither Franckism nor Debussyism offered the French public that element of emotion they always have sought—and always will seek—in music, especially on the stage. Perhaps this consideration had something to do with the scandalous vogue enjoyed by the Italian "véristes," who succeeded in presenting the illusion of life by means of strong and rapid impressions in which music seemed to have no place at all. But though it did not express feelings which a certain brusqueness of action did not even allow time to develop, it emphasised grandiose gestures and roused an impression of violent pathos that was wholly superficial, by means of melodic inflections, captivating though vulgar and degrading in their sensuality.

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It is mainly by reason of the contradiction in these diverse tendencies that the present confusion has come about in French dramatic music.

But we should also include as contributory causes:

1. The persistent "haunting" effect of Wagner's work, which is gradually regaining its former status and perhaps still represents the most solid foundation of musical drama. The symphonic school, however, at first at all events, merely offered a faithless reflection of this work, depriving it of most of its expressive signification.

2. The very strong reaction that looms ahead against impressionism. This was expected. It was inevitable that these vague blurred sounds should speedily be followed by a return to clear, definite, so-called melodic outlines, though really strangely different from what we have hitherto been accustomed to look upon as melody.

Here music evolved along somewhat similar lines as painting, where the reign of vague luminous vibrations culminated in the birth of cubism with its stupifying geometrical lines. Just as Claude Monet preceded Picasso, so the impressionism of Claude Debussy paved the way for the polytonic extravagances of Stravinsky in his latest mode, continued noisily by the famous "Six" who set up, as a sort of symbolic flag, the facetious triviality of Erick Satie. Besides, they are already finding themselves left behind—as invariably happens—by teams of Italian "bruiteurs," who announce the most amazing combinations of squeakings and growlings, cracklings, cluckings and croakings, effected by a complex system of levers, pulleys and cranks: the latest expression of that incapacity which cynically replaces music by noise.

Truth to tell, polytonic fantasies still belong mostly to the concert-world. All the same, they are already trying what they can do in pantomime, and have aims upon the theatre. We have to consider the unhealthy attraction which invariably accompanies the search after what is strange and unusual, even though it be the very negation of beauty.

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Two questions now arise:

Is not the success of symphonic music in France during the past fifty years calculated to raise doubts as to the preponderance of theatrical music in the future? In any case, how will the

clash of so many opposing tendencies, the sort of ebullition characteristic of the present moment, affect theatrical music?

We should have deliberately to shut our eyes to the constant trend of the Graeco-Latin genius towards dramatic forms if we imagine that musical drama will henceforth have to be thrust into the background. And again, the entire evolution of music reveals the capacity of the French mind for coördinating the most diverse aspirations, blending them into one harmonious condition with that sense of measure which characterises our race.

This sovereign faculty of our national genius is bound to manifest itself once more. Shaking themselves free from the various influences of snobbery and from the tyranny of doctrinal preconceived opinions, our musicians will see that art cannot be limited to a few mantel-piece adornments nor to certain laboratory formulas, that it cannot breathe freely in the rarefied atmosphere of a shrine. Seeking inspiration from the great breath of life alone, they will unite their scattered forces in an effort to restore, each according to his own temperament, the fine tradition of French dramatic music, which after all has never been really broken, in spite of a few temporary extravagances.

They will endeavour to continue the proud tradition of the masters of French musical drama during the second half of the nineteenth century: men whose works have successfully passed the test of time, because, apart from their absolute musical value, they are the clear, just and searching expression of human feeling as it shows itself in the form of drama. This tradition, inaugurated by Berlioz, a man of the utmost sincerity and of vivid, passionate imagination, has been mainly continued—to mention only the dead—by Reyer, with his vivid and delicate sensibility; by Bizet, whose high-coloured though simple and direct art proclaimed the marvellous joy, the intoxicating beauty of life; by Gounod and Massenet, whose voluptuous inspiration expressed, by totally different methods, the most universal and profound of human feelings—love. It will not stop, thanks to the efforts of many noteworthy musicians—none of whom can be mentioned, as the names of them all would have to be given—who, regaining self-confidence, will continue the work of their predecessors without wasting time on vain and barren demarcations of formulas.

They will restore the essential principles—momentarily shattered—of the musical theatre, utilising every advance in harmonic and instrumental technique, though exclusively releasing the force of expression and of evocation. They will never allow the symphony to submerge the drama; rather, following the ex-

ample of Weber and Wagner, will they dissolve it, so to speak, in musical action so as to enable the words always to concentrate force, light and life within themselves.

Making use of declamation with inflexions as supple as—though more penetrating than—those of the spoken sentence, they will still not forbid the use of melody, not of that which affects the aridity of sonata themes or fugue subjects, but of open melody, which does not prevent advantage being taken of the expressive force of that most moving of all instruments, the human voice; of that melody which made up the whole of Mozart's operas and which, even in the case of Wagner, gushes up spontaneously to the topmost summits of the purest lyricism.

Aware that the truth of to-day is vastly different from that of yesterday, and perhaps even more so from that of to-morrow, they will never be dismayed at innovations, however apparently audacious, but rather, in a spirit of enlightened eclecticism, will try to find out how these innovations may help forward the inevitable transition from the past to the future; not forgetting that, though the torch-bearers do not look behind, they should nevertheless not lose sight of the fact that those alone who preceded them in the race placed the sacred charge within their hands.

Finally, conscious of the social rôle of their art, knowing that dramatic music has an influence upon the masses which pure music never will have, they will become the eloquent interpreters of human feeling, ever drawing inspiration from that eternal spring of emotion which music, as a whole, really is.

(Translated by Fred Rothwell)

FRANCO ALFANO

By GUIDO M. GATTI

FRANCO ALFANO had, as a very young man, one of those strokes of good fortune which might have been the ruin of any artist less sane and less conscientious. At the age of twenty-seven he won success in the theatres, tasted the delights of notoriety, and—what is more important—found a publisher, the greatest among Italian publishers, who threw open the doors for him, and supported him liberally. Such good fortune brings in its train hazardous consequences. First of all, because so youthful an artist, seeing himself all at once esteemed and courted, may become insufferably vain, lose control of his artistic faculty, and give himself up to an exuberance of production lacking the strict supervision of self-criticism. In the second place because, having hit upon the type of composition which, at the given time, is most grateful to the public palate, he may be seduced into an infinity of repetition, or, at least, induced to hug the variable winds of public taste and follow them with strenuous solicitude in writing future works. The public is a psychological entity—whether logical or capricious is beside the matter—that does not bestow its approval or its sympathy without assuring itself that the artist returns its favors with due consideration; that is to say, that he hearkens to its suggestions and heeds its inclinations. Otherwise it rebels, and its fondness changes to indifference or, perchance, to hostility.

This last has been, in a way, the fate of Alfano. His opera *Risurrezione* inspired in all quarters the rosiest visions of this artist's future; but the public, and together with them the majority of the critics and even the publisher, thought that he might possess himself of the heritage of those maturer opera-writers who had reaped an abundant harvest in the years preceding and were still following up, though at a slackened pace, their earlier successes. Taken as a whole, Alfano's opera might excite such expectations, for the musician indubitably did not succeed—excepting as we shall note further on—in liberating himself from influences foreign and domestic; the construction of the scenes, the melodic conception, the vague and uncareful phrasing, the very craving for the faraway and fascinating *milieu* of a Russia



Franco Alfano.

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somewhat according to the fashion then in vogue, all contributed to create the impression that Alfano had aimed at producing a pendant to Giordani's *Fedora*, so favorably received in 1898, seven years before. This impression found further partial confirmation in the opera which followed some three years later, *Il Principe Zilah*, whose reception at Genoa was cool. For this opera the libretto had been selected by the publisher—a libretto carelessly thrown together, and lacking genuine emotion, which the good Illica had adapted from the like-named romance by Jules Claretie—and with it Alfano paid his tribute of gratitude to public and publisher alike. But the ill success of the opera, far from discouraging him—indeed, he may well have had a premonition of it, as he accepted the book against his better judgment—gave cause for reflection and for thoughtful self-examination concerning the paths for which his temperament fitted him. These paths were manifestly not those which he had thitherto followed. Hence, this juncture marks the beginning of the evolution of what may be termed the real Alfano, him of the *Romantic Suite* for orchestra and yet more pointedly of the following *Symphony*, penned between 1908 and 1910. Thenceforward we shall see the musician sure of his ideal, pursuing it with his every faculty, and realizing it step by step in works, not all successful in equal measure (and of this we shall take note with the sincerity due to genuine artistry), yet without one instant of hesitation or uncertainty with regard to the direction of his efforts. One clearly perceives that the musician no longer has in view this kind or that kind of music, that he is not composing with side-glances at one or another dramatico-musical conception, but that he knows what he desires and what he may dare desire. And now, well knowing that his ideals coincided not at all with those of the public, foreseeing the difficulties, neither few nor slight, by which he will be confronted, he unhesitatingly renounces an immediate and popular success. It is not for him to bow to the taste of the groundlings; it is for them to rise to his level. However arduous and painful the task, it does not daunt the will of an Alfano, who feels how greater will be the joy when success shall crown efforts so directed. "For the public in despite of the public"—such might have been his motto for the years to come.

And for quite a while the public viewed his endeavors with marked disfavor. To the disappointment of no longer finding itself face to face with the Alfano of *Risurrezione* was added the fact that this opera-composer was writing—hear! hear!—symphonies for orchestra. The idea! An opera-composer so well

entraîné, and now losing himself in the foggy depths of a symphony? In 1910 this seemed such an unconscionable proceeding as to throw discredit upon its author without further debate. A symphony!—something to be left to the Germans, or to such sterile musicians as sit down at their desks to construct some montrosity as one would construct an algebraic theorem. (Remember that this was the period in which Pietro Mascagni had launched his famous saying: "When inspiration shall fail me, I shall write a symphony"—a flower not wholly unique, but certainly one of the gaudiest, in his critical garden.) It was not enough that the public discussed this prodigal son, guilty of treason to opera, that being in the last analysis treason to patriotism; his next-following theatrical work was awaited with a strong dose of distrust, justified—in the public mind—by the fact that said work would, in all probability, distinctly show forth the evil effects of his symphonic backsliding.

To this mental attitude was due in great part, we believe (though other unfavorable attendant conditions were not wanting), the small success of *L'Ombra di Don Giovanni* at La Scala, Milan, in 1914; an outcome that unquestionably grieved the composer, who had worked on the opera enthusiastically, with lavish expenditure of spiritual and intellectual treasure; yet he was not disheartened, so sure was he of an inevitable and speedy vindication. And this finally arrived—not taking into account the reception accorded to sundry minor pieces of chamber-music—in December, 1921, with the sweeping, spontaneous success of *La Leggenda di Sakùntala* at the Teatro Comunale of Bologna.



Franco Alfano was born at Naples on March the 8th, 1877, and (to be quite exact) in that enchanting region known as Posillipo, where—as the folk-song has it—everything sings ("tutto canta"). (A singular source for a musician so often reproached with being a patient and somewhat cold-blooded constructor after the Nordic manner; singular, however, only to those incapable of recognizing, in all Alfano's music, that ever-present nimbus of meridionalità, of mediterraneanism in the truest and best sense of the term.) He studied at the Conservatory of San Pietro a Maiella, which has always been and still remains the stronghold of Italian musical conservatism, under the guidance of Camillo de Nardis and Paolo Serrano; at the age of twenty, however, he left it to finish his studies at Leipzig with Jadassohn. Without

in any way belittling the merit of his first teachers, it is probable that the severe and sagacious discipline of the Leipzig Conservatory contributed greatly toward making of Alfano a formidable contrapuntist, a master of technical form, a consummate virtuoso—qualities which the consensus of opinion now ascribes to him, and which, during a certain period of his productivity, may possibly have weighed too heavily on his temperament and cast their shadow over certain pages.

Thereafter came a few years of vagabondage, up to the dawn of the new century—years of vagabondage in every sense. The musician, urged by material considerations and likewise by an eager desire to explore other minds and other lands, to live a fevered and abounding life full of surprises, betook himself from Germany to Russia and thence to Paris, and wrote page after page of music put in print for him by German publishers, two operas (*Miranda*, by Fogazzaro, and *La Fonte Euschir*), besides the two ballets *Napoli* and *Lorenza*, both produced by the theatres. We are quite unfamiliar with this music, which the composer has forgotten (perhaps not repudiated, for it still holds its place in his heart as a record of his fantastic and restless adolescence); only a few dances written for the danseuse Cléo de Meroda, the faithful interpreter of his ballets, have come to our attention. They are slight matters, thrown off by a facile pen as occasional music; quite unpretentious, but, in certain features, particularly in harmonic coloration here and there, they reveal the grace and good taste of a composer incapable of vulgarity even in improvisation.

And now we arrive at *Risurrezione*, the opera that launched its author and brought him before the Italian public, to begin with, and later introduced him to foreign audiences (it was played several times in Brussels and Berlin). We have already expressed our opinion of this opera; it met with public favor because, in its total conception and in the language employed, it did not depart from the type in vogue at that time (and, alas! even now much the same). Reminiscences of Puccini and Giordani are not lacking, and there are pages of melodramatic mannerisms where the vocal line assumes forced aspects that find justification and support neither in the words nor in the sentiments expressed, but follow automatically a set pattern of phrase effective in itself. But assuredly the public did not sufficiently note that in this music, expressed more or less completely, there lived a yearning poesy, a tender melancholy, united with a certitude in handling harmonic color, all of which, from a purely esthetic viewpoint,

elevate the opera above certain of its presumptive progenitors or collaterals. Alfano (to cite one instance) realized, in the last scene of the first act, the atmosphere proper to the soul-state of his two protagonists, and illustrated certain shades of awakening passion which, with other musicians, would almost certainly have been interpreted by a ruder and more trenchant burst of sonority. One feels in this scene, and in others as well—for example, in the finale of Act III—that this musician possesses a fresh, vivid poetic sensibility that has not as yet succeeded in finding a way to full expression in its own language. Alongside of the stage-expert who instantly recognizes the tone and the emphasis natural and adequate to a given scene, to any single measure, there was in Alfano a poet—a bit romantic, a trifle sentimental—striving to reach the light, and who, so far as in him lay, gave indubitable evidences of his presence. For the rest, let it suffice to consider the subject that the musician had chosen for his work—seeing that he himself made the choice after reading the romance by Tolstoi—to arrive at the conviction that thenceforward the mental attitude of the composer was notably different from that of his contemporaries. In *Risurrezione*, we admit, the environment is realistic and the characters are those of every-day life, but the artist, in creating them, elevated and purified them; this is a poem, not a romance, of compassion and love, bearing in the background as a consolatory epigraph the words of redemption—a redemption through love. Alfano, who, in his inextinguishable thirst for life, had certainly never dreamed of a redemption through compassion alone (*à la Parsifal*), or through the renunciation of any life-faculty whatsoever, felt his heart go out to Katiusha, that creature of passion, that maiden who, throughout the cruelest and basest vicissitudes of existence, had kept her soul unsullied; in her he may have seen the symbol of the ideality of love, and in the drama the extrinsication of that beneficent Power that rules the world. Is a subject of this sort realistic?—or, if you prefer, veristic? Do you fancy that this or that or the other one among the opera-composers of the then youthful Italian school would ever have entered into the spirit of Katiusha and Dimitri Nekludoff, or found aught of interest in their impassioned destinies? We, in view of the libretti of that period, do not believe it; there is too wide a chasm to bridge between the realism of *Risurrezione* and the *verismo* of *Amica*, to cite an opera nearly coeval with the former.

In this change of front toward a poetico-musical stage (and all the more because, although revealed, it was not realized to

the full in that epoch of overbearing operatic Philistinism) is to be found, in our opinion, one of the fundamental features of Alfano's work as a composer. Naturally, we shall see how a strictly musical orientation developed side by side with the other until the composer's individuality was thrown into strong relief, and, with *La Leggenda di Sakùntala*, we reach the point where the poet has discovered the adequate expression without borrowing means or method from anyone. But we insist on this spiritual, and therefore esthetic, characteristic, which increasingly finds materialization and realization in the works of his maturity. To mention Alfano in the same breath with Puccini—as we recently noticed in a bulky volume by Solvay on the evolution of the musical stage—even should one be acquainted (as Solvay is not) only with *Risurrezione*, is to commit an unpardonable piece of injustice, to say the least.

Those who knew and associated with the composer during that period, well remember the strong disinclination he manifested immediately after the success of *Risurrezione* to bearing the burden of his putative descent, and they tell how he already felt stirring within him the aspiration after a new theatrical creation very unlike that which the public (that simplifier and classifier *par excellence*) now expected of his artistic personality. This aspiration certainly found no fulfillment in the following opera, *Il Principe Zilah*, written to order and without enthusiasm, as stated before. All the same, it would be a gross error to dismiss it without a glance, for it is the critic's duty to give heedful attention even in cases where the author himself assures him that he will find nothing of interest. Although, taken as a whole, the opera *Il Principe Zilah* is indubitably inferior to *Risurrezione*—for which the book is much to blame—because of loose organization and a lack of homogeneity, together with the absence of a strong, substantial dramatic framework, one encounters flashes of a language already showing a departure from that of the preceding opera, and, in certain pages, a ferment of more subtle and profound expression, evidencing other influences that have arisen to combat those of yesterday, foreshadowing the revulsion whence is to issue the newer expressiveness of the musician. The years following are, in effect, devoted to the composition of two symphonic works; and of these years some are fond of speaking as of an intermezzo that divides, rather than unites, the first and second periods. In our opinion, this symphonic intermezzo occupies, on the contrary, so natural a position in the musician's development that, however desirable it may seem to follow un-

interruptedly the progress of Alfano's stage-works, we do not feel at liberty to proceed further without setting forth the distinguishing features—features in part transitional, yet of significance for us—of these two symphonic works, at present hardly known to the Italian public.

While written one after the other, almost without an interval, the two orchestral compositions belong, one might say, to two different aspects of Alfano's personality, of which more anon. Just here let us say merely this—that the Romantic Suite still lives as it were in the same atmosphere that was breathed by the Alfano of *Risurrezione*; whereas the Symphony in E constitutes the architectural *pronaos* through which the musician will penetrate into the very life of his dramatic conception, as it is presented in the subsequent *Ombra di Don Giovanni*.

The Romantic Suite comprises four movements having the following captions : Notte adriatica, Echi dell'Apennino, Al Chiostro abbandonato, Natale campàno. From the mere enumeration of these titles the reader will understand that the work was inspired by some involuntary reawakening in the musician's soul of fond memories of his years of adolescence after long days of exile and turmoil among strangers, and that in its composition he abandoned himself, with a joy mingled with melancholy, to a re-creation in his own spirit of those impressions, to their musical expression in a language at once spontaneous and simple, as these same impressions had been simple and spontaneous. The Suite was named "romantic" by its author, perhaps because he wished (not without bitter irony) to guard against an eventual impulse toward overpowering self-surrender to the songful emotion of his longing for home. To be romantic, in this sense, means simply to be susceptible to the most heartfelt emotion and the tenderest melancholy. And Alfano—even now, when it is all the fashion to display a certain gloomy facetiousness, to indulge in a certain cheerless laughter, to despise any and every sentiment held in honor yesterday—is still, in the sense we have defined, a romantic, capable of sincere and effusive emotion in view of certain sorrowful aspects of nature and human life, and of interpreting them in his own impetuous speech, his own frank exuberance, without dread of appearing old-fashioned or provincial. He is one of those men who are known as "temperamental"; he possesses a youthful and multiform vitality that manifests itself in a vivacity of sensation increasingly rare in these times of ours. Alive to all the voices of life and to all the loftiest sentiments, he cannot remain cold, he is sometimes unable to control the spiritual reactions

excited by his superacute sensibility. He is, withal, a romantic in the sense that he has held fast within his soul a spark of that sublime exaltation which, in art, was termed romanticism and limited by the bounds of an historical period, but which, as an element of *ethos* and therefore of art, is to-day still alive, as it always has been, in artists of Alfano's temperament; characterized by an unconquerable aversion for the mediocre, the commonplace, for plain, prosaic reality, but with a passionate enthusiasm for all ideality, for every noble sentiment, for every trait that tends to transcend material considerations and to make us forget, and were it only for a moment, the dull oppression of materiality;—characterized, in its realization, by a tendency toward the lyric rather than the epic, toward the symbol rather than the concrete expression, toward generalization and universality rather than the singular and the individual. (The reader will have perceived that, in our view, no poet can be other than romantic.)—But let us return to the Suite.

This suite is distinguished by a style essentially melodic, as one might readily suppose after what has been said. Through each panel in its fourfold division there runs a strain or, rather, various strains of a melody not supremely original—disporting itself, on the contrary, in certain refined allusions to Neapolitan sensuality, but avowing throughout the impress of the popular spirit; and while the titles might lead one to expect that he was to assist at a description of four rural scenes, he would always find in the foreground human figures, or rather the figure of the composer, who indulges in impassioned sighs and outcries. There is, indeed, the sense of nature, but a sense of subjective passion predominates in the centre of the scene; the voice that sings and sways us is that of man; it recalls certain antique pictures with enormous figures in the foreground and a background of tiny hills and trees disappearing in the distance, to which one pays scant attention. Alfano doubtless had no intention of writing one of those impressionistic pieces *d'après nature* which at that time had begun to arouse the interest even of the general public, and which must assuredly have been the object of careful consideration on the part of an artist as cultivated and inquisitive as ours. All of which may be seen in detail in the score, either in the harmonization or the instrumental arrangement (certain runs for flute in the whole-tone scale, in the first movement, and certain very slow, almost static, unisons to express a sacred and mystical silence, might possibly not have occurred in this suite if Alfano had not read, felt and admired some score of Debussy's);

but let us hasten to add that in the orchestral writing, taken as a whole—not merely regarding the spirit of the composition, than which nothing could be more anti-impressionistic—this Italian composer distinctly differentiates himself from the French master. One need only take note of certain upflarings of puissant coloration, and certain exuberances of sonority, in the final movement, the *Natale campàno*, to be convinced of this; here and there are even some peculiarities of Debussy's writing that have acquired, in the totality of the movement, a savor purely meridional and sanguine; it imparts the thrill of a warm-hearted, joyous festivity, whereas in the French scores even the *fêtes* have an indefinable sense of uneasiness, a presentiment, as it were, of that dark and empty silence that will fall upon the dying echoes of the last song.

With the Symphony in E we reach the domain of absolute music, in the sense that it neither serves as a commentary on words nor bears the flavoring of any "program" imparted to us by the author through the medium of a title, as in the Suite. Like the Quartet for strings, antedating it by several years, it is music pure and simple, and should therefore be considered by and for itself, quite apart from any poetical or picturesque data. We have to do with a spacious composition modelled after the type of the classic symphony, each movement markedly contrasted with the others and endowed with just so much of formalism as suffices to relate it to the illustrious examples of this species of composition. (Originally, i.e., when first performed at San Remo in 1912, it was composed of four parts, notably developed—an Allegro, a Largo sostenuto, an Andantino, and a Finale allegro, in other words, of the four movements of the classic symphony, with an Andantino of Brahmsian type in place of the Scherzo. Later, at its second hearing in Bologna, 1918¹, the author on taking it up again was impressed by its excessive breadth and reduced it, entirely suppressing the third movement and some pages of the score in the Finale. And the audience, by its reception, signified its approval of this revision.)

The Symphony in E establishes one of the most striking characteristics of Alfano's music, the predominance of the contrapuntal, that is to say, the horizontal element. By this the composer heralds the dawn, and likewise assumes the leadership among Italians, of that movement of reaction and consolidation

¹The foreign reader should not be surprised that between the first and second performances of this work an interval of six years intervened, and that it seems probable that a like interval will elapse before the third. In Italy, in view of the scarcity of orchestral organizations, such is the common fate of almost all modern compositions, even of those which are enthusiastically acclaimed on their appearance!

which is based on a revised evaluation of counterpoint and of the rhythmic pulse animating composition, both obscured by a recent past whose attention was directed almost exclusively toward harmonic effect. This symphony gives the impression of an edifice solid and attractive in appearance, neither overladen with ornamentation nor bald, with strong lines more or less geometrical without being stiff, without fantastic contortions; somewhat subdued in color, but with more than one liberty in the distribution of light and shade, yet without deliberately planned asymmetry. Not everything therein is admirable and perfect; that there are zones of shadow and heaviness of detail, it were useless to deny. The musician did not invariably keep his inspiration at white heat and fashion poetic images of whatever he might touch; some of the materials he brought to the construction of the edifice are lifeless; they remain just where the builder placed them; they do not spoil the line or offend the eye, but they do not shine; they are like a blank space in the façade. Yet for all that the Symphony is a work exceptionally worthy of note because, besides being conceived with a nobility and elevation of sentiment nowhere lost sight of, it contains pages of real beauty, and in its totality is animated by an intense vitality. The second movement, which (in our opinion) is the one wherein the author has almost invariably succeeded in overcoming the frigidity of the material by the fervor of his emotion, deserves to be ranked among Alfano's finest works, those that are the sincerest and the most apt to reveal his individuality as a musician and poet.

The Quartet in D—a maturer work, written by fits and starts between 1914 and 1918—reasserts Alfano's virtually unlimited capacity as a constructor and as an exquisite artisan in form. (We remark, once for all, that our composer is recognized as one of the most expert technicians that contemporary Italy can boast—and not Italy alone, perhaps; for the rest, this capacity of his is amply confirmed, like his quality as an instructor, by the pupils he has formed at the Liceo Musicale Rossini in Bologna, where he has been the Director and a teacher of composition since 1918.) This quartet of Alfano's is in direct succession to the last Beethoven quartets, and the Brahms quartets, as regards their total conception; therefore, like all the music of its author, it stands squarely in opposition to the French impressionistic type, in which the classic grouping of the four instruments tends to reproduce, on the technical side, the sonority of an orchestra, and to present itself, from the conceptual side, in the guise of a suite of picturesque scenes bound together solely by

contrast in color. Over this work of Alfano's there presides, instead, an unfaltering unity and a vigilant observance of certain canons of form that the musician adopted, not as a restriction but as esthetic principles which his talent might turn to best account. In any event, there is a vast difference between his symphony and this quartet; in the latter there is a fuller surrender to inspiration, hence more warmth and poetry. Here we meet with the most noteworthy characteristics of the opera that the composer was writing at the same time—*Sakùntala*; and first of all that rhythmic mobility and restlessness which lends its language a vivacity and nervous vigor wholly modern, together with an harmonic sensibility that yields most precious and savourous fruits, while ever retaining its own sanity and freshness. At times Alfano sweeps the instrument of his art with an excess of ecstasy; he takes a voluptuous delight in the working-out of each detail, smoothing and polishing it; he delights in weaving from fragments of themes or even with suggestions or echoes of themes a web at once fine and strong; but he never divagates into that Parnassian coolness and aloofness which is the product of pure cerebration, nor does his harmonic artistry ever become *maladif* or sickly-sweet. The Quartet abounds in impulsiveness, in outbursts, in sonorous touches; there are flashes of energy, of volition; it sets forth an episode of impassioned humanity; its flowing polyphony creates a dramatic atmosphere, more especially in the first and last movements, while in the second it subsides into a sweetness which is not ecstatic contemplation but a momentary respite conceded by the artist to his soaring phantasy.

We shall not dwell at length upon the Quartet, which really deserves cursory analysis to set in relief the gems of the first water wherewith it is adorned. And we shall merely mention the *Three Poems by Tagore* (for voice and piano) and the other vocal chamber lyrics—all little things, but exquisite. We must hasten—warned by limitations of space—to return to the theatrical works, which would seem to afford the most comprehensive view of his personality, and by reason of which he is numbered among the most noteworthy composers of the present epoch.

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With the *Ombra di Don Giovanni*, produced for the first time at La Scala in Milan on April 3, 1914, Franco Alfano launched his personal conception of the drama as it had now become clarified in his mind—a conception in which he was sustained by his strong

will-power and the mastery of his art acquired through varied experiences. We have already emphasized his sympathy for a certain style of dramatic poem with glimpses of romanticism; we shall now see how, in the drama of the *Ombra di Don Giovanni*, written by that fine poet Ettore Moschino, its characteristics are realized in the full materialization of a poetical stage-play such as one had seldom met with before. The subject of the dramatic poem is, succinctly, as follows: One evening, while the air is ringing ominously with cries of agony and dying moans, Don Giovanni Manara returns to his ancestral castle of Cinarca. He has grown weary of his turbulent life; his earlier career as a triumphant conqueror and seducer of women on Spanish soil, now fills him with repugnance, so that, in order to live the closing years of his life in solitude and humility, he has sought refuge in his wild fatherland, Corsica. His castle, perched boldly as a falcon upon the mountain, is a safe retreat; against this stronghold, so well supplied and watched over by the old family of Rinuccio, the hatred and feuds of the people of the countryside, stirred up by the rival family of Alando, break powerless. Don Giovanni Manara reappears unexpectedly, and his ears are greeted by the lugubrious lamentations of the aged Dariola d'Alando (who this very evening has lost her youthful son, slain by an unknown hand) accompanied by a chorus of female mourners and another chorus of infuriated men. The calm within the castle, the words of the aged servitor, the sight of the chapel where his mother was wont to pray, all tranquillize him, and he offers up the prayer which alone can restore peace to his heart. Now the people of the village hard by the castle arrive in search of young Alando's assassin, rush violently into the courtyard, and find Don Giovanni on his knees before the crucifix in fervent prayer. This sight gives pause even to the hatred of the mother and sister of the murdered youth; a man who can pray with such devotion can not be an assassin.—In Act II the conflict is revived; the maid Vannina, a hardy and venturesome scion of the Alandos, succeeds in invading the castle by surprise; she accuses its master, in whom she recognizes the slayer of her brother, of the dreadful deed, and cries aloud for vengeance. The count at first hearkens humbly and unretaliating to the implacable arraignment; but no sooner does Vannina arouse the spirit of conquest within him by her boast of invincibility, than his mood suffers a sudden change to indifference, and he withdraws. Soon he reappears, no longer as the humble penitent, but as the superb cavalier enwrapped in a voluptuous atmosphere of mysterious lights and songs. With her who was

but now his enemy he renews the subtle and perfidious game of seduction that he played so many a time in his past career; and once again the lady is fascinated, overpowered by that soul-searching gaze, by those accents that fall like sweet music upon her spirit.—The final act is divided into two parts. The first part plays on the barren mountainside bearing the grave-mound of the youthful Alando, where the vow of vengeance is renewed; the aged mother, now aware that in the castle of Cinarca is hiding the assassin of her son, by the frenzy of her grief inflames the angry people to assault and set fire to that sombre retreat, wherein the Count is dwelling alone since old Rinuccio's murder. Vannina, who now belongs soul and body to Don Giovanni, opposes this insane and atrocious vendetta with all her strength—but in vain; she is bound, as a backslider, to the crucifix, and all the others hasten away to the work of destruction. But Orsetta, pretty little Orsetta, whose infantile heart bears a secret love for the handsome cavalier, instinctively feels the sore distress of the loving girl, and sets her free to warn Don Giovanni of the impending peril. In the last scene Vannina vainly implores him to make his escape; he longs to expiate his sins, and to die happy in knowing at last what love is, that "great mystery of creation." The conflagration spreads through the castle; the storm of fierce clamors and sweeping flames bursts out in wildest fury. The two lovers, borne down by onrushing assailants while embraced in the heroic exaltation of love, disappear as if overwhelmed in a sea of blood. On this swift and terrible episode the curtain falls.

But, now that we have given a rather summary exposition of the scenic happenings of the opera, it strikes us that we have acquainted the reader very meagerly with the spirit animating the poem; neither have we been able, on the other hand, to introduce *in extenso* within permissible limits the most important passages—those that serve to throw light upon the characters of the several personages, and more especially on that of the protagonist, who is indubitably not only the most interesting figure in this libretto, but the newest in the lyric theatre—a figure which, in particular, aroused the interest of the musician by reason of its dual personality. True, in Moschino's poem there are not lacking scenes of a certain conventionality, and likewise personages who are introduced for theatrical effect; but in justice it must be said that even to-day—and for still more cogent reasons ten years ago—it constituted in its totality a praiseworthy example of dramatic poetry, both in its delineation of characters and its exposition of psychological reactions. One

of its salient characteristics is manifested in the collective effect of unexpected mutations in psychic states, in the rapidity with which it passes from one situation into another; a mutability which the musician has followed with a logic and a unity of line that throw them into relief while remaining in sensitive touch with every subtle shade of emotion.

It can also be said that the musician, on scanning the libretto offered him by Moschino, felt at once that in and through this plot he had an opportunity for the full and untrammelled unfolding of his musicianship in all its exuberance (as has been sometimes remarked with a note of reprobation). In the *Ombra di Don Giovanni* there is such a fullness of music, so rich a vein of inspiration, that it was sure to disconcert a public whose appetite was whetted for melodramas in which everything was economized with beggarly parsimony. (Recall Victor Hugo's saying, "A ceux qui tâtent le fond de leur poche, l'inépuisable semble en démeence" [To those who touch the bottom of their pockets, the inexhaustible looks like lunacy].) One critic, after the first performance, ingenuously revealed the impression thus made both on himself and the audience when he wrote that in Alfano's opera there was music enough for two or three operas. To us, however, it does not appear that the excess of music (if excess there be) so detracts from the value of the opera as that which occasions a heaviness of expression or a lack of clarity and grace in the exposition of the contending characters.

Here it should be stated that Alfano's "exuberance"—an exuberance which, as already observed, gives the tone to each and every manifestation of his temperament—is winning very gradual and guarded comprehension and acceptance. His soul-life is ever most active and alert; his brain seems never at rest, his sensibility is always in readiness to seize upon the most varied impressions from mankind and nature. In this connection it is not unimportant to bear his southern origin in mind; he talks with a fire and dash that takes one's breath away, emphasizing his phrases, sketching them in the air, as it were, as if he could see them, with sweeping gestures of his arms. But this extreme vivacity is no mere outflow of verbosity or grandiloquence; he does not smother you in a cloud of empty words; his discourse is not the aimless explosion of an impotence seeking to conceal itself beneath a flood of verbiage. Alfano's discourse is replete with ideas and observations that are always acute and often profound; and in his mind these ideas form a living chain, the conceptions are uninterruptedly linked together, and sheer physiological ex-

uberance causes them to gush forth incessantly in closest succession, yet without ever losing their individuality and essence. In consequence of this peculiar mental faculty of the artist—the immediate reflection of his temperament—it is clear that he must have a predilection for situations in which the characters do not remain static and psychologically invariable from first to last, but present successively the most diverse aspects in reaction to extremes of action; and such are the characters which, under certain regards, might be called sympathetic to his own. Those of Don Giovanni and Vannina, for example, in the opera under consideration, are of this order. Don Giovanni veers from pilgrim humility to warlike ardor, from the longings of a contrite heart to the lust for conquest, and in the conclusion of the drama attains equilibrium through the integration of these two aspects of his personality—that is to say, when his thirst for peace and love is no longer a Franciscan flagellation or the *cupio dissolvi*, but finds its satisfaction in the realization of true love, in the rapture, thitherto unknown to him, of again finding himself and renewing his life in another being. Don Giovanni's death has no religious connotation, other than that of a religion of life; he does not renounce, but achieves, his ideals and immortality. Vannina passes over from hatred to love through swift phases that are justified by her feminine psychology; in the beginning it is a purely sensuous love, mounting in the sequel through suffering to a spiritual passion that wholly transfigures her. The musical delineation of these two characters, the way in which the musician has fathomed the depths of these two souls, establish his right, without further debate, to the honorable distinction of being ranked among the most powerful of contemporary musical dramatists. To this Alfano has attained both with the orchestra and the vocal parts; but considering that these latter possess an importance of the first order, especially for one who seeks to analyze and classify the complex of characteristics presented by Alfano's works, the critic who examines the scores should refer to the symphonic comment—and, where this is not at hand, to his piano transcription—if he would find the key to, and gain clear insight into, certain situations, and those not of least importance.

An ever-recurrent and ever-provocative question, this of the formula of equilibrium, of the plane of coexistence of the two principal elements of dramatic music—song and orchestra;—an equation in whose solution the entire problem of opera, so to speak, is included; hence, a question to be examined first of all, in order to

avoid ambiguities of facile conception. So let us see how Alfano apprehends the office and the relative position of these two factors.

In his musical drama the orchestra is not so much occupied in the chiseling of characters as in creating for them an appropriate atmosphere, in presenting them in the medium best fitted for the free expression and effusion of their emotions. The personages live lyrically in their song; to each is given his characteristic melodic physiognomy, which—in its essential lines—remains unaltered. This characterization is not, however, a decided thematic individuation after the Wagnerian manner, but a *modus* of singing that distinguishes the one from the other, and withal remains evident and definite throughout all the vicissitudes of passion. Herein resides the importance that the musician gives to the vocal part, and herefrom is derived the lyrical "tendency" of the opera. The orchestra follows the song without overmastering it, but sustaining it by a seemingly autonomous development, not gathering itself to underscore especially any given accent, but approaching and fusing all together in a stream of uninterrupted polyphony. In a word, the orchestra creates the medium wherein the drama develops; it is necessary in order that the hearer may be transported at once into the spirit of the situation, but in itself alone it cannot present that situation to the listener in its essential phases.

Herein the opera of Alfano of which we are speaking differentiates itself distinctly in tendency from what appears to be the drift of some revivalists of to-day and yesterday—this applies to the drama of Debussy as well as to that of Ildebrando Pizzetti. (The same observation is equally true of *La Leggenda di Sakùntala*, which follows the same path as its predecessor, *L'Ombra di Don Giovanni*, though naturally surpassing the latter markedly in point of maturity.) One need only study the treatment of the words in the operas of Debussy and Pizzetti, and compare it with that of Alfano, to convince oneself of the wide divergence in conception. In Alfano's operas the play of passion and the progress of the action take their course in so musical an atmosphere that there are times when one gives no heed to the words, so clearly are they presented, not as verbal signs but as an expressive essentiality, by the language of the tones; here the music in and by itself creates the emotion, annulling, as it were, the verbal significance of the word. And in this wise our composer opens a chasm between his opera and every type of what might be termed the *syllabic* musical drama. In him we do not find the preoccupation, which in certain others sometimes becomes an obsession, for a

musico-verbal fusion whereby the word acquires two values, the one intimately expressive, the other extrinsic, phonic. He sees in verse merely an imperfect sign whose deficiencies the music must supply by developing the emotionality and stimulating the lyric flight.—We shall not discuss the aims detailed above, which, for that matter, Alfano himself has never proclaimed as a theoretical scheme, and which, as we have worded them, might be susceptible to some partial correction. After all, what signifies the way that is chosen, if only it leads to the goal, and what matters the method or tendency of the creative work if the product is such as to reveal a new beauty and to enrich our patrimony of emotions? And, to our mind, *La Leggenda di Sakuntala* belongs to this not too numerous company of art-works; in it the esthetics of Alfano find most luminous revelation, becoming poetry and life, and, as such, ought to be judged apart from any *a posteriori* process of the intentions.

In the *Ombra di Don Giovanni*, as already remarked, there were still some concessions to certain theatrical effects of manner; in *La Leggenda di Sakuntala* every trace of compromise has vanished; the scenic activity is reduced to a minimum, and we are in the presence of a work of poetry pure and simple.

For several years the musician had borne in mind this legend of the heavenly maiden as a well-spring of inspiration for a future opera. It may be that his thoughts dwelt on the lines of Goethe's epigram:

Willst du die Blüthe des frühen, die Früchte des späteren Jahres,—
Willst du was reizt und entzückt, willst du was sättigt und nährt,—
Willst du den Himmel, die Erde mit einem Namen begreifen,—
Nenn' ich, Sakuntala, dich, und so ist alles gesagt.

Giovanni Pozza, who for many years has guided with refined taste the dramatic and musical criticism of the *Corriere della Sera* had spoken of it to him quite frequently; and so one fine day Alfano fashioned after the drama of Kalidâsa the libretto for his opera, and entrusted its versification to a poet-friend who to this day prefers to remain incognito. The seven acts of the original drama were reduced to three episodes "with an opportune simplification of the supernatural elements," as the author informs us. These three episodes of Alfano's, which I shall name, respectively, the Idyl, the Suffering of Love, and the Transfiguration through Love, condense and aptly arrange, according to a line ascending without interruption, the simple objective happenings born of the fancy of the Indian dramatic poet; above all, the poetry is conserved in its eternal and universal attributes.

In Act I, King Duscianti (here simply the King, "Lord of the World") discovers Sakùntala while, during the hunt, he is chasing the sacred gazelles of the hermit Kanva; on the instant there bursts into bloom, like a tropical liana, the sweet, spontaneous Idyl. All nature, fervent and love-fraught, seems to live and breathe in the thrill that quivers in these two young hearts; murmurs stir the branches, the earth sighs, and evening falls unheeded by two young souls that are now as one. The king departs, leaving his ring as a pledge of fidelity to his chosen bride, Sakùntala.—In the second act Sakùntala is languishing in the absence of her lover; she lives her life in a world apart from that of her friends, now hardly a memory to her; indeed, she forgets to open the door of the hermitage to the ascetic Durvasas, according to the duty assigned to her. And the ascetic, in a terrible outburst of anger, curses the forgetful maiden, pronouncing the ominous malediction: "May the man thou lovest know thee not! Only a jewel shall recall thee to him!" And now Kanva returns; the aged and fatherly hermit knows all—that Sakùntala loves, that she is to become a mother, and that her son will be "the hero of the world." Now let the girl go to the king, show him the ring, and be welcomed by him as his spouse and a happy mother.—Act III discovers the arrival of Sakùntala at the royal abode and her meeting with the king; alas! while traversing the river she dropped the ring, and her lover does not recognize her. In vain her prayers, her entreaties; he remains mute, cold, inexorable. Sakùntala departs in desperation—her fate is sealed. Soon thereafter the king, recognizing the ring, which has been found by a fisher on the riverbank, cries with a loud voice to recall his beloved—but she returns not. The king is told that she was caught up into heaven in a fiery cloud, leaving naught on earth but her veil, now adored by the faithful hermits as a sacred thing. Sakùntala, however, addresses her spouse from a superterrestrial world; in serene and consoling accents she says: "I forgive thee! Thy forgetful heart was spellbound by Destiny. Do not repine. It was written, that a life of light should be born of a heart's most grievous martyrdom—thy son! Behold him! He shall appear to thee, the young hero of the world! Take him, and remember the immortal Sakùntala."—Her farewell to this world is accompanied by a background of radiant light and the resounding voices of Nature and of men prostrate in adoration before the divine miracle.

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After the above succinct exposition of Alfano's lyrical conception of the *opera in musica*, the reader will not fail to perceive that this poem of *Sakùntala* which the musician selected for himself and presented in its essential features, is—still more than that furnished by Moschino—of a sort most suitable for the full and free outpouring of his musicality and for the assertion of his melodramatico-esthetical tendency. Here the soul-states are variable, it is true, but clear, simple, elementary—love, grief, the spirit of sacrifice; here there are no personages imposing, as I might say, by the weight of their carnality; but figures which, as human types, are absorbed and counterbalanced in the effusion of their sentiments; here there is no crowded action, but a drama slowly developing without swift impulsion (excepting perhaps in the scene of non-recognition) on the level of our common humanity, were it not for the lofty tone of its expression and the vague, far-away atmosphere that envelops it. Hence it came that Alfano could lyricize every element of the action and elevate to the loftiest plane every trait in his characters, which latter, while remaining human in so far as their feelings touch and harmonize with our own, live in an ideal world, move with the facility of which Nietzsche dreamed, and reveal their innermost being like crystals of the purest water. If there are phases in which their physiognomy seems indistinct and their features sometimes evade our sight, their spiritual selves are never hidden from us; the characterization of the personages, which was the especial aim of the dramatists whom we mentioned above, does not in this case present itself to our musician as the most important problem to be solved. And so one does not find, in *Sakùntala*, incisive themes, fixed and precise melodic figurations, proper to mark indelibly on the memory some personage or sentiment (like those met with, to cite an illustrious example, in Wagner); hence it might seem as if the thematic material did not in itself possess a strong vitality and did not combine organically to form a firm musical texture. But, instead, one has a feeling of being rapt into the midst of a musical sphere, of living and breathing in a musical environment, and although your perceptive faculty may not succeed in seizing this feature or that, your sensibility will be continuously stimulated by a myriad of sensations following uninterruptedly one upon the other, like a fresh and ever-renewed current of lyric life.

Still, there are pages in *Sakùntala* where this continuous flow of the musical molecules in all their mobility and instability seems to be pent up—to gather itself together on an architectonic base,

whereupon we view the gradual emergence of definite contours, the stabilization of the proportions, the equilibration of the masses. And then it seems—and it really is so—that all the fervor of life diffused throughout the score is materializing and condensing around a nucleus; as if the musician, after giving free rein to his musical inspiration, had gathered together its generative elements and so ranked and marshalled them as to embody a synthesis of all the emotions that successively appeared and disappeared in the course of the action. Such is the case in the three finali of the opera, and more particularly in those of the second and third acts, to whose effect no audience could remain indifferent. And this not so much because they present certain scenic effects or certain grandiose features such as are familiar in almost every opera—the outcome of calculation and a theatrical ability to make the most of the situations; but because one instinctively feels in them, as in a masterpiece of pictorial art, the realization and revelation of the significance, which might escape one, of the entire preceding development. As Sakuntala's farewell to the hermit Kanva, to her faithful companions, to the flowers and all the natural objects about her, as her transfiguration and ascension after the renewal of her life in that of her child, represent the ultimate issue of her love-sorrow and the drama of her existence (an issue logical in accordance with a law both sentimental and profoundly human);—similarly, the music setting forth these aspects of Alfano's opera is in itself a summary of the two acts; not, however, so much so from a strictly formalistic point of view (as it might be with the reëmergence of the principal themes), as in its quality as a compendium and integration of the atmosphere of the *modus exprimendi* that took shape during the pages preceding. The artist felt an imperious necessity, on the one hand, as a master-builder, to crown his sonorous edifice, and, on the other, as a dramatist, to condense upon one point of strongest esthetic emotion the life-giving elements of the action.

This labor of solidification, which will impress the listener most clearly and unmistakably in those portions of the opera to which I have called attention—and also in some other intermediate passages, e.g., the first words exchanged between the king and the maiden, in the latter's invocation of the clouds in the second act, and elsewhere—will doubtless arrest the eye of anyone who examines the score and thoughtfully scrutinizes its texture. The carefulness in details, the felicitous combination and transformation of the themes, the fine sense of color, the

elegance of the lines (an elegance graphically reproduced in the arrangement for piano), the taste in harmonization, all render this one of the most admirable orchestral scores that I have had before me in recent years. Differing as widely from the dense and frequently pleonastic scores of Strauss as from the "spottily" sonorous pages of Debussy, from the almost incohesive and unpolyphonic works of Pizzetti as much as from the violent coloration of Stravinsky, the symphonic score of *Sakuntala* bears the stamp of a distinct individuality in its orchestration, and one of which the critics should take notice. It is solidly *charpenté* throughout, and yet not heavy, with an infinity of delightful details that do not interfere with its vocality; in continual transformation and fluctuation marked by the elasticity and delicacy of passages in tonalities of contrasting color, it has the effect of a wide landscape resplendent in an ever-changing illumination. And, above all, so intimately interwoven with the musician's expressive sense, that one feels as if it must have sprung into being at the same moment with the musical material.

No less interesting is the vocal part of the opera. We remarked above that Alfano has not adopted the esthetic device of declamation, of dramatic recitative, but has preserved the lyrical character of the voice-part as a line varying in form and, up to a certain point, developing independently, following a sinuous arabesque. Let us add here that this song-melody possesses a very high expressive value, which (in order that the spectator may always perceive it distinctly) the composer causes to emerge above the orchestral flood. It possesses its expressive value by reason of its inherent quality—its capacity for ample expansion, for the creation of a circumambient atmosphere of resonance, for sensible materialization through gradual development along its chosen line. These melodic figurations of Alfano's discover that sonorous sensualism that our fathers prized so highly in certain pages of their time; they are full-blooded, vibrant, with such an exuberant lissomeness and grace that they run no risk of being effaced against the phosphorescent background of the orchestra. Even when sung by a singer of modest ability, one senses their vibration; for their vitality awaits only the awakening spark for instantaneous, buoyant expansion.

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In singling out *Sakuntala* as the most complete revelation of Franco Alfano's personality, we certainly had no intention

of suggesting that in it our musician had attained to an unsurpassable height; it would be sheer stupidity to assign a limit to the evolution and potential scope of an artist scarcely turned of forty, and who, like Alfano, appears to possess the gift of an eternal youthfulness of thought and feeling. We set the opera at the head of the list for the simple reason that it exemplifies in fullest measure each one of his outstanding traits—and those which, to our mind, can never suffer transformation. *Sakùntala* represents the final result of manifold experiments, and points out one path for modern melodrama; with regard to the direction of this path there will be argument and division of opinion; so much is certain—that Alfano himself feels full confidence that he is on the right path, i.e., on the one in which he can exercise his creative ability in harmony with his individual temperament, his own emotional nature, his cultural self. The opera on which he is engaged while we are writing these lines follows along this same path in so far as the subject (the idyl of *Aucassin et Nicolette*) is concerned. And when a musician like Alfano has won through to genuine self-knowledge and a right estimate of his faculties, and has reached a solution of his personal esthetic problem, we can await his forthcoming opera with much confidence.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE. All the theatrical works of Franco Alfano are published by G. Ricordi & Co., as well as the Suite, the Symphony, and the Poemi di Tagore. The String-Quartet, however, is the property of the firm of Pizzi & Co. of Bologna.

(Translated by Theodore Baker)

VIEWS AND REVIEWS

By CARL ENGEL

PEOPLE whose judgment is generally conceded to be as far from wrong as their virtue is above reproach, hold the opinion that music has fallen to a depth of unexampled wickedness. The terms of good or bad, by them applied to a composition, no longer signify success or failure of workmanship and inspiration, but indicate the moral tenor of the music, the edifying or depraving—yes, depraving!—influence it is said to exert upon the hearer. If true, this points to a very alarming state of affairs. Where, under these circumstances, is Mr. Justice Ford, where is his able second, Mr. Sumner? Apparently, a task awaits these gentlemen, much more severe than any which so far has engaged their ingenuity and perseverance. While they are defending the public against the dangers that lurk in the novels of Mr. D. H. Lawrence, poisons infinitely more subtle and deadly are being prepared for us by that most “innocent” of Muses, Polyhymnia. Compared with her sinful products, such books as the “Ragionamenti,” the “Perfumed Garden,” or “Le Moyaen de Parvenir,” would seem the spotless white of equally ancient nursery tales. What ground is there for these charges?

I am not so sure that music has not to thank the imagination of certain literary persons for some of its lately acquired disrepute. When the Kreutzer Sonata was branded as capable of undermining the foundations of wedlock, there remained hardly a piece of music that was safe from similar denouncement by the *sbirri* of a jealous sister art. Should Paolo and Francesca's complice tome stay unrevenged? While the demoralizing exercises in Fagin-Czerny's “School of Velocity” have yet to be turned to account in the story of an agile lady shoplifter, we have been told repeatedly and at great length how the flame of Tristan and Isolde's music scorched the wings of immaculate maidens and set young men dreaming of “free love” with breakfast on an alcohol burner. The aforementioned Mr. Lawrence has gone so far as to invent a situation in which two hapless lovers are thrown into the arms of each other through the agency of a musical instrument that a rash punster might be pardoned for calling the tragic flute. Helmholtz would have enjoyed the episode.

Of course, these accusations were proffered by writers of fiction whose musical understanding, to say the least, was rather vague. To refute them would be almost as easy as to disregard them. But critics who are thoroughly versed in the harmonic and æsthetic laws of music, thoroughly competent to estimate the ethical value of a composition—names shall be given—now tell us that music is headed straight for perdition; unless we stuff our ears with wax or, like Ulysses, lash ourselves to the mast of moral rectitude, we shall succumb to a lure more envenomed than was the siren's sweet and pernicious song.

All this is most disquieting, especially because it is so unexpected and finds the majority of us wholly wanting in a knowledge of when to apply the wax. Too long have we trusted blindly to what we thought was the innate purity of music. A writer in John Murray's *Quarterly Review*, eighty-five years ago, expressed the belief that

there is no Hogarth in music. Punch can give her no place on his staff. She cannot reason, and she cannot defile. She is the most innocent companion of the Loves and Graces; for real romance is always innocent. Music is not pure to the pure only, she is pure to all. We can only make her a means of harm when we add speech to sound. It is only by a marriage with words that she can become a minister to evil. An instrument which is music, and music alone, enjoys the glorious disability of expressing a single vicious idea, or of inspiring a single corrupt thought. It is an anomaly in human history how any form of religion can condemn an organ; for it could not say an impious thing if it would.

The quotation is long, and had to be so, for a reason. Medwin, I believe, reports Lord Byron as saying that it is a common trick of reviewers, when they want to depreciate a work, to give no quotations from it; which was intended as a direct hit at the *Quarterly*. Therefore, no unfairness toward the culprit. The views of this anonymous writer must be given uncurtailed, so as to show the better how complete is the change of things. What was perfectly consistent with the romantic spirit in the year of grace and barricades, 1848, is now hopelessly out of date. Take, for instance, that remark about the organ. An organ remains an organ, after all, whether it stand in a church or in a moving picture theatre. Yet in the theatre this selfsame instrument has not only acted the wag, it has been made to utter profanities and sounds of unmistakable vulgarity. It furnishes the daily accompaniment to scenes of horse-play and buffoonery which would have made the artist Hogarth blush, and the satirist yawn. Punch was a Hamlet in comparison with Mr. Charles Chaplin. But

these, you will say, are not cases of "absolute music"—to call it "pure music" would be irony. I am coming to that.

Music, wedded to words or actions, has indeed been a "minister to evil" long before the projector dimmed the footlights. Nor does the whole guilt rest on the stage. Loose songs have probably existed ever since loose people sang; and that may lie a good deal farther back than most histories trace the evolution of music. The galant century, in France, produced a rich and varied crop of galant airs. What is interesting about the songs of that period, such as "Le Manchon," or "Les Vapeurs Conjugales," or "Le Sucre d'Orge," is that they were published with the official imprimatur of the court librarian and royal censor, and that the printers of such frail and dainty morsels could seriously recommend them as "les plus propres à former les jeunes gens et les perfectionner dans la Musique." True enough, the music of the songs has nothing to do with the words. Most of these old airs are charming, and certainly all are pure, not only to the pure, but to everybody. As regards the words, the "jeunes gens" of that day were perhaps a little franker than are the young people of ours, but not a whit worse. Our bookstalls may not openly display anything quite so spicy as "The Charms of Cheerfulness or Merry Songster's Companion," containing gems like "The Inn turned out," but there are in private circulation not a few songs almost as disreputable, and certainly far more stupid. The armies in the late war knew them by the hundreds. However, if we have become more careful in the sort of texts we publish, we have grown bolder in the tunes to which we sing them. Those eighteenth-century songs, stripped of their naughty words, stand up without blemish, perfectly innocent and often exquisite melodies. Quite differently, some of our present street and dance tunes have a noticeable tendency to remain coarse and downright vulgar, even without the slightest hint of an underlying text. Should music really have lost that glorious disability of expressing a vicious thought? Could it have learned, unaided, to be wicked and indecent?

Before taking up these questions, let us admit that one of the prime factors in the superb unfolding of music, during the last century and a half, has been none other than the erotic element. Prof. Dr. Adolf Weissmann, a well-known German music critic, historian of Berlin as a musical center, biographer of Bizet and Chopin, has written a little book entitled "Der klingende Garten." It is a series of "impressions of the erotic in music." The chapter headings are: The Elements; Voices; Mozart; The Viennese;

Chopin; Symphonie fantastique; Traviata and Carmen; Wagner; Puccinism; Salome; Conclusion. This is not enough to indicate the trend of thought that runs through these chapters, but it will suggest an outline of its progress; also, it will hint at the direction in which the author goes for proof of his thesis that the Dionysian is the strongest motive in modern music. Echoes of Nietzsche are plainly audible. The whole inquiry leads inevitably to the stage, that is, to the stage of the opera house. In short and feverish sentences, hurting each other in constant impact, we are told of the sway that Dionysos holds—the despotic sway to which all contrary forces must finally bow. Neither religion nor metaphysics, neither matter nor form, can long continue to interfere with it. The sparse choral buds into richer harmonies; the church cantata must suffer the obtrusion of languid arias and brilliant coloratura; sonata and symphony fall back upon the dance; not even the fugue can escape melodic infection. But all roads tend to one and the same point, the opera. Dr. Weissmann blames the suppression of the Dionysian element for the present “aberrations” of music. The only salvation lies in the opera, the synthesis of all sensuous beauty. In the Conclusion we are given to understand that of all modern opera composers the most authentically erotic, and therefore the greatest, is Mr. Franz Schreker.

That pulls the reader up with a start. Has he been deaf to the voice of a prophet crying in the atonal and polytonal wilderness? Doubt in the authenticity of Mr. Schreker's eroticism is quickly dispelled by casting a glance into *Der ferne Klang*, *Der rote Tod*, *Irrelohe* and all the other operatic “poems” he has written. Nor is it difficult to see why Dr. Weissmann believes that in music eroticism and greatness go hand in hand, that on the stage they walk in closest and happiest union. The “Marriage of Figaro” and “Don Giovanni, ossia il dissoluto punito” might easily be imagined to disturb a stern moralist, even though punishment, in some form or other, can be held up to the weak brother as a wholesome deterrent. But opera is not concerned with pointing a lesson. If there be tragedy, it is one of passion; love has lost nothing in the defeat. It stands glorified even in death. And Dionysos smiles.

That most operas have not been forbidden by the police is largely because the words to which those passionate melodies are wedded seldom reach the ear and understanding of the listener. Also because most singers are too busy watching the prompter or conductor to do the “action” full justice. When it so happened that Tosca-Garden and Scarpia-Marcoux felt sufficiently independent of the guiding bâton to put their minds

to the business in hand, His Honour, the Mayor of Boston, felt constrained to intervene, and threatened to close the opera house, in case everything was not promptly put back on a purely platonic basis.

Offhand, I can think of only two operas in which the motives of love and sex are not predominant; they are "Hänsel and Gretel" and "Joseph" (Méhul's, of course, not Mr. Richard Strauss's Veronesian extravaganza). There may be others which I forget for the moment; but I think that by far the greater number deal with more or less exciting situations brought about by amatory entanglements, licit and otherwise. It is common knowledge that the last Empress of Germany, who vetoed the performance of Strauss's "Feuersnot" in any theatre run by her impresario husband, would not go to hear "Die Walküre" because of its incestuous crime and the instrumental postlude of twenty-six measures, after the first act curtain has made its precipitous and timely descent. And this in spite of the fact that European royalty was more inbred than the population of an Alpine village.

If Wagner was erotic, so was Bach, sturdy father of twenty children. Both were exuberant, dynamic natures. Eroticism and religion are closely related; but not interchangeable. Abbé Liszt never quite succeeded in disentangling the smells of frankincense and patchouly. Wagner's religion was the weaker and more artificial, because it needed a searchlight and boys' voices aloft in the wings. The love-sick Olympian, Beethoven, made his own god after the image of a Solemn Mass. The catholic Franck and the protestant Bach never got far away from the protecting dimness of the organ loft. But each had his restless hours, and to those we owe some of the best music they wrote.

Bach's noble sensuousness required no trappings. Nor is it, in the end, important that Wagner composed for the theatre. When you listen to his finest, most erotic music in the darkened concert room, it is more marvellous, more telling than when a pair of corpulent singers strain for high notes and toss each other on the stage. What is important, is the indubitable fact that the erotic "Tristan Prelude" and the "Liebestod" can be divorced from the theatre without loss of musical potency, and with an increase of pure delight to the hearer, while the eroticism of Mr. Stravinsky's "Sacre du Printemps" falls absolutely flat if it ceases to be the accompaniment to a pantomime, without which it loses convincing power and gains an unsuspected degree of—well, of obscenity.

The word it out. There is no blinking the fact, pure music can be impure. That is its latest, sorriest achievement. Dr. Weissmann's book does not make clear enough in what this defilement consists; yet it is a book worth reading, if only for the sake of the chapter on Wagner, into which the author has crowded one of the most searching expositions of those three complicated characters: Wagner, Cosima and Bülow. The book disappoints in its Conclusion, or conclusions, which do not properly stress the change that musical eroticism has undergone within the last ten or fifteen years, nor define the new means of expression which it has found. This omission is all the more apparent, as one turns the pages of the book and incidentally comes upon the illustrations of Michael Fingesten.

Mr. Fingesten is the artist who supplied Richard Strauss's somewhat tarnished "Krämerspiegel" with more or less fitting decorations. No doubt, the ten full-page illustrations he contributed to Dr. Weissmann's book, were intended to be erotic. I humbly submit that they are not. Some of them are merely vulgar caricatures; but most of them are lewd. They do not illustrate what Dr. Weissmann is talking about. Rather are they the exact counterpart of that music which at present is growing ever more prevalent, and which Dr. Weissmann rightly calls un-erotic, but fails to label as obscene.

Another critic has supplied the deficiency. Dr. Alfred Heuss is a musical writer of sagacity and erudition. He is a musicologist of wide and enviable reputation. For ten years he was the editor of the journal published by the International Music Society, which was killed by one of the first cannon shots, in 1914, and is sadly in need of resurrection and reanimation. Dr. Heuss's historical studies may have awakened in him a greater love and appreciation for the old than he has for the new. Yet in 1906 he wrote shrewdly and not unsympathetically of Strauss's "Salome." Peculiarly enough, he thought at the time that Strauss had not written music which was as perversely sensual as Wilde's play, and that Strauss could not have done so had he tried, because the very essence of music repels everything unnatural and depraved. That sounds not unlike the 1848 reviewer in Murray's sedate *Quarterly*. In 1921, Dr. Heuss was moved to say plain things about Mr. Schreker's operas, especially about the erotomanic texts and their defenders in the press. There were signs of growing irritation in that otherwise very sensible and lucid article.

But now we are come to the astounding criticism that Dr. Heuss published in the "Zeitschrift für Musik" (February, 1923);

this, you will remember, is the journal which Robert Schumann founded in 1834 and of which Dr. Heuss is the present editor-in-chief. It should be borne in mind that the work reviewed is one of purely instrumental chamber music, although scored for a small orchestra. It has no programmatic title. The last movement is marked "Finale: 1921." Again I shall have to quote without stint:

It is accomplished! Modern German music has at last succeeded in tackling life by its most frivolous, most vulgar side; where orgies of sexual perverseness are celebrated and the French adage *Après nous le déluge* is made a German motto. The man who has worked this 'miracle' is the composer Paul Hindemith, in his 'Kammermusik' for small orchestra (Op. 24, No. 1) performed [in Leipzig] under the direction of W. Furtwängler. . . . We are here confronted with a music such as no German composer of artistic bearing ever before has dared to imagine, much less put on paper; it is music so lascivious, so lecherous, but also imbued with such unequivocal artistic force of expression that only a very extraordinary composer could have written it. . . . It is the most vicious, the most frivolous music possible, also the most realistic; music which in Stravinsky may find its parallel, but hardly its superior. . . . In Hindemith burns the cold fire of selfishness that knows only the ego; he shrinks from nothing; his imagination is keenest and richest when it seeks those fields of modern life most highly esteemed by the dramatists of sex and smut who regret that they may not go farther in their licentiousness than they do. But the composer of purely instrumental music need stop at nothing; and Hindemith is the musician who draws his main strength from this absence of all fetters, from this 'intangibility' of instrumental music. . . .

Mercy upon us! What a reversal of opinions! Not so long ago we were assured that, only when wedded to words, music was considered capable of improprieties. But it seems that music, divorced from words, has found ways and means of being infinitely more improper. What are we coming to?

After all, it is no concern of ours if Mr. Hindemith, who is indeed an extraordinarily gifted musician, chooses musically to misbehave, or if Dr. Heuss, who is not a hypocrite, sees an offense against public morals in what Mr. Hindemith is pleased to designate, not without apparent reason, as "Chamber music." It is a symptom of our times, and as such it deserves to be chronicled for a future generation which may understand better than we do what we are aiming at, what we are trying to erect on the latest layer of ruins.

For the moment, it would seem that most people have only one desire—to forget. And there is much of which the recollection might profitably be extinguished. Eros, Bacchus and Morpheus are the benign dispensers of oblivion. Their ever-willing

handmaiden is Music, the "food of love," companion of the cheering (and forbidden) cup, melodious weaver of enchanting dreams. But sleep has been murdered in the cities by motor trucks, steamboat whistles, machine-pianos, ukuleles, phonographs, and houses built so flimsily that you can hear your neighbor breathe. The consoling juice of the grape has been abolished for the sake of surreptitious poisons. Sex is dragged into the mire, when it is not scientifically dissected for the benefit of an "enlightened" public that has lost the sacred awe of nakedness. The factory for work, the church for worship, are still open. Humanity, at rest and play, is struggling desperately. Music must come to the rescue; so must the dance, with consequential unconfinement of a rather hectic joy.

No one will deny that America is to-day the leading provider of dance music in the world. Some of this music is unsurpassed for its originality and healthy verve. Some of it has developed rhythmic peculiarities which seem to have an almost aphrodisiac effect on certain people. Dancing has been subjected to much just censure. But it is not in America that such reproof has been most merited. Nor is it the American example that has corrupted the dance, that has prostituted music.

Let these things be well understood. For here you should be told that Dr. Heuss has set, over his critique of Mr. Hindemith's "Kammermusik," a title. Translated into English, that title reads: "The Foxtrot in the Concert-Hall." Dr. Heuss must permit me to point out his error if he believes that he has discovered the first intrusion of this dance into the sacred precinct. He is equally wrong, I fear, if he concludes that the effect of alleged "obscenity," especially in the final movement of Mr. Hindemith's work, can be laid to the introduction—obvious and not especially felicitous—of rhythmic and melodic patterns which to Europeans in general, and to a German in particular, may represent the distinguishing marks of a dance admittedly American in origin and known by the name of fox-trot. The spirit of Mr. Hindemith's music is so essentially different from the typically Afro-Ebreo-American, that Dr. Heuss either has never heard a real fox-trot or he unflinchingly denounced a kind of music which may have its faults as well as its virtues, but is not as a rule the kind of music which strives to make its "intangibility" a loophole for obscene phantasms. Mr. Hindemith did not borrow from America only; that is shown by the "furioso" passage in the same, final movement. It is no longer the vaunted "furor teutonicus," but a rage induced by the bite of another breed

of dog. However, this is not intended to be a critical discussion of Mr. Hindemith's "Kammermusik," which may or may not deserve the opprobrium heaped on it by the indignant Dr. Heuss. All I want is, to move that a protest be spread upon the record of musical history: if European composers and critics wish to label musical obscenities with the names of American dances, they are committing a deliberate fraud.

Much saddening but instructive information can be gleaned from the "Monatsberichte," the monthly announcements of music published in Germany and Austria. Without exaggeration, four-fifths of all the music announced betrays by its very titles the uncommonly low order and lewd purpose of it. In France it is just as bad. It is interesting to see how many American tunes are among that music, although it is sometimes hard to detect them; for in migration to Vienna, Paris and Berlin, our songs invariably lose their somewhat silly but, on the whole, inoffensive texts, to be invested with new ones of which Mr. Justice Ford and Mr. Sumner might not always approve. These publishers' announcements swarm with fox-trots, shimmies (a French one, not long ago, naively had it "she-me"), wiggles and wobbles, not to forget the "blues" and "jazz."

It is none of our business what Europe does with these dances. There were musicians, once upon a time, who purified a satanic sarabande and refined a proletarian waltz. If America can make musical capital out of its first true folk-music, all the better. If Europe sees in it only an escape into musical idiocy and filth, we do not wish to interfere. But we may be pardoned for protesting against a possible inclination on the part of learned musicologists, to call this latest chapter in the history of European music: "The American Infection."

Has the speech of music really been extended to comprise the salacious vocabulary of the libertine? Was it not enough that he had seized upon all the other arts for his sorry amusement? The calamity would be augmented with the danger from the violent reaction that is bound to arise against music declared to be obscene. As if we did not have a sufficient number of reformers looking after the welfare of our body temporal and immortal soul. Like every reaction, this one, too, will go too far. And because of a few degenerates, we shall see the warm, throbbing pulse of music stopped;—not permanently, but just long enough, perhaps, for us to be folding up our tents before the new day starts. The one just coming to a close was fertile beyond measure. It dawned when Tannhäuser, after oppressive dreams, returned from

the domain of Frau Holda, the pockets of his doublet bulging with little chromatic notes. They fell by the wayside, and the morning breeze carried them to healthy, avid soil. They grew luxuriantly, yet naturally withal; the perfume of their flowering was pure and rich. Then, in the sun of noontide, began the cultivation of exotic hot-house music. From crepuscular shadows sprang mad-house music. And with the approach of ominous, sleepless night, we are promised—but why anticipate? Another dawn is sure to break.

Meanwhile, I shall leave you to decide who is right: my worthy predecessor in John Murray's *Quarterly Review*, or my excellent elder, Dr. Heuss.

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